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The Conquest of Mexico in the Nineteenth-Century Transamerican Novel

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The Conquest of Mexico in the Nineteenth-Century Transamerican Novel

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2016

Acknowledgements

I have many people to thank for inspiring me to begin this project and supporting me as I have completed it. This formidable list includes my parents, Kenneth and Diana Hixenbaugh, my grand uncle, Warren Ilchman, and of course my husband, Sean Malley, not to mention the many other family members and friends who have encouraged me during my time in graduate school. In particular, I want to thank Hannah Alpert-Abrams, Roanne Kantor, Julianna Leachman, and Stephanie Malak for volunteering sage writing advice and for helping me articulate my ideas over hundreds of cups of coffee.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the University of Texas faculty who have seen this dissertation through. As co-supervisors of the project, César Salgado and John Morán González have been exceedingly generous with their time and feedback, and I have relied heavily on their counsel as I have transformed the project from conference presentations and scraps of paper into the (somewhat) more coherent current document. I am also indebted to the other members of the committee, Phillip Barrish, Naomi Lindstrom, and Gretchen Murphy, who have shaped my understanding of nineteenth-century literature through their research and mentorship, as well as to Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, Mark Longaker, and Sônia Roncador, who have helped me find and feel confident in my voice as an educator and a scholar of literature.

Lastly, I want to thank E. Cram, Jacob and Sarah Hollinger, Chris and Elizabeth Maine, and Chris and Felicia Sears for opening their homes to me as I conducted archival research and presented drafts of these chapters at academic conferences.

The Conquest of Mexico in the Nineteenth-Century Transamerican Novel

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

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Over the course of the nineteenth century, writers raised in the New World produced at least twenty historical novels about the Conquest of Mexico (1519-1521), making it one of the topics and time periods most frequently evoked in the era's literature. The oldest of these novels, *Jicoténcal* (1826), has interested scholars of transamerican literary relations for its plea for hemispheric unity in the face of Spanish imperialism. However, the other novels, despite their popularity with contemporary readers, have tended to be dismissed by modern critics as distractions for women and children and poor imitations of the historical novels of Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper. This dissertation, which includes chapters on literary texts by the Cuban author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (*Guatimozín*; 1846), the US American author Lew Wallace (*The Fair God*; 1873), and the Mexican author Ireneo Paz (*Amor y suplicio*; 1873), repositions the Conquest novel as a work of socially engaged literature that is meant to be consumed during the reader's leisure hours but is nonetheless interested in shaping the reader's political actions. Drawing on archival materials such as the authors' letters, journalism, and unpublished speeches, as well as the work of scholars like Doris Sommer, Roberto González Echevarría, and Gretchen Murphy, the dissertation reveals that the writers of Conquest novels manipulated the story of Spain's subjugation of the Aztec Empire to intervene in contemporary debates over imperialism, republicanism, and regional/national identity. Together, these texts chronicle Americans' shifting perceptions of the relations between the New and Old Worlds and between the creoles, Indians, and mestizos who share the western hemisphere. When approached as a unique discursive formation, Conquest novels challenge the boundaries between nations, genres, and disciplines that have tended to constrict scholarship on nineteenth-century literature. They expose some of the ways that authors have used stories about the past to reflect on the present and guide the future.

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Introduction

> Entró Cortés con sus capitanes, todos perfectamente armados, mostrando en sus semblantes, a par del orgullo que les inspiraba sus posición presente y las esperanzas de su futura gloria, el asombro de encontrar en la corte de un soberano a quien llamaban *bárbaro*, la magnificencia ponderada de las antiguas monarquías del Asia.
>
> (Cortés entered with his captains all completely armed, revealing in their countenances at once the pride which their present position inspired, the hopes of their future glory, and their amazement to find, in the court of a sovereign who was called *barbarous*, the wonderful magnificence of the ancient monarchies of Asia.)
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> Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, *Guatimozín, último emperador de Méjico* (Guatimozin/Cuauhtémoc, the last emperor of Mexico; 63/22)[1]

Nineteenth-Century Conquest Novels

In the last five centuries, many authors have revisited the Conquest of Mexico, as Spain's subjugation of the Aztec Empire is remembered, in original works of literature[2]. The most celebrated of these authors have been the historiographers—Bartolomé de las Casas, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl, Antonio de Solís,

[1] In this dissertation, I use two pages numbers to indicate the location of original quotations as well as to give credit to any English-language translations that I have consulted. In this case, the translation is the work of Helen Edith Blake, whose translation appeared in 1898. When only one page number follows the translation of a Spanish-language passage, the reader may assume that I have written the translation myself.

[2] I want to acknowledge that the word *Aztec* insufficiently describes the indigenous communities inhabiting the American mainland when Cortés arrived there in 1519. A reference to *Aztlán*, the northern homeland from which many of Mexico's indigenous groups are believed to have migrated, *Aztec* does not appear in historiographical literature until after Cortés had succeeded in subjugating Tenochtitlan. While specialists prefer to use *Mexica*, the name of the specific group inhabiting Tenochtitlan, I have opted for *Aztec* because it is the word the majority of the authors I am considering also used, and because it remains in common use today among non-specialists. For more, see Boone's *Stories in Red and Black* (2000), Chapter 1.

Francisco Javier Clavijero, William Robertson, William H. Prescott, and others—who compiled encyclopedic accounts of the event, synthesizing archival documents, updating the narrative to accommodate current trends in politics and research and relaying the event's memory from one generation to the next. However, the Conquest[3] has never been the exclusive province of historians, as authors in other fields have also recruited its signs and scenes for works of poetry, drama, and fiction[4]. In the Americas, where the event joins anticolonial uprisings and musings on slavery as one of the topics most commonly evoked on the pages of literature, the Conquest of Mexico has become the iconic instance of Old World imperialism—a single episode in the long drama of Europe's subjugation of the indigenous Americas that emblematizes the entire process.

The long fictional narratives I examine in this dissertation, which I call Conquest novels, began appearing in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, beginning with the Spanish-language novel *Jicoténcal* (1826)[5] and followed by two novels by the US American author Robert Montgomery Bird: *Calavar; or, The Knight of the Conquest* (1834) and *The Infidel; or, The Fall of Mexico* (1835). All three of these works were

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[3] I use *conquest* (small *C*) to refer to the general act of conquering another people and *Conquest* (large *C*) to refer specifically to the Conquest of Mexico. Spain also conquered other areas of the New World, including the Yucatán/Central America, the home of the Maya, and Peru, the home of the Incas. However, as Ianes affirms, the Conquest of Mexico received the greatest attention from Spanish American writers in the romantic era (mid nineteenth century), while these other conquests did not figure prominently into the literary imagination until closer to the turn of the twentieth century (92).

[4] The interested reader may learn more about indigenous imagery in New Spanish poetry and drama in Stephanie Merrim's *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture* (2011) and about references to the Conquest in US poetry and prose in the first two chapters of Eric Wertheimer's *Imagined Empires, Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771-1876* (1999).

[5] The English-language reader may know the book as *Xicoténcatl: An Anonymous Historical Novel about the Events Leading up to the Conquest of the Aztec Empire*, as it was retitled in the translation by Guillero I. Castillo-Feliú (1999). I continue to refer to the novel as *Jicoténcal*.

published in Philadelphia, a city hailed by its large population of Spanish American political refugees as "the birthplace of important writings that could provide a model for independence in the Americas," as Rodrigo Lazo writes in "Hemispheric Americanism: Latin American Exiles and US Revolutionary Writings" (306). More than a coincidence, this common city of publication suggests that since its emergence the Conquest novel has been entwined with and even encouraged by contemporary discourses of independence and republicanism. Like the historical novel, a genre to which the titles I explore all arguably belong, the Conquest novel evolved as readers and writers searched for ways to assess the legacies of European imperialism and advance their support for the revolutions and social reforms that would bring their regions out of provincialism and into modernity.

In the Appendix, I list fifteen Conquest novels completed by authors from Cuba, the United States, and Mexico between 1826 and the mid 1890s. This is only a partial inventory of Conquest-related novels, as it omits works that are set in the years directly after the fall of Tenochtitlan, such as the anonymously-authored *Aztec Revelations; or, Leaves from the Life of the Fate-Doomed: An Autobiography of an Early Adventurer in Mexico* (1849), Vicente Riva Palacios's *La vuelta de los muertos* (The return of the dead; 1870), and Ireneo Paz's *Doña Marina* (1883). Moreover, in its present form the list betrays an unfortunate imbalance between texts initially composed in English (11) and Spanish (4). On the one hand, I think it is probably true that English-speakers in the United States authored more Conquest novels than did Spanish-speakers in other regions of the Americas, in part because Spanish America spent so many decades attempting to

distance itself from its indigenous history for fear of being perceived as barbaric or antiquated in the eyes of the world, as Rebecca Earle explains in greater detail in *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (2007). On the other hand, the discrepancy is also a product of my reliance on texts that have been digitized or collected in the University of Texas libraries. As I researched this project, I noted several bibliographic listings of Spanish-language titles that suggested an engagement with the Conquest theme. However, I elected to aggregate in the appendix only texts whose content I have been able to examine and confirm.

Despite these restrictions in scope and research, my hope is that seeing these texts listed together will help the reader agree that the Conquest novel comprises a "discursive formation" and merits examination as a coherent strain of literary expression. As the reader is probably aware, Michel Foucault addresses the concept of discursive formations in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). Taking his fellow historians to task for placing undue faith in socially-constructed "unities" like historical eras and chains of influence, Foucault challenges scholars to develop methodologies that excavate relations between historical processes that are obscured in prevailing or master narratives. By bringing "statements"—a word he uses to encompass all discursive acts—into dialogue with one another though they have conventionally been divorced by disciplinary boundaries, discursive formations encourage stories countering master narratives to "emerge in [their] own complexity" (47). In Foucault's view, restraining the impulse to tie all discursive acts to already-existing concepts and narratives empowers scholars to unearth historical

accounts that are more nuanced and useful because they restore statements to their appropriate time and social context. This is as much a matter of protecting discourse from presentist analysis as liberating it from the quest for origins and precedent. As Foucault explains, "We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears… Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs" (25).

Post-structuralist scholarship has diminished many of the unities disavowed by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. However, certain assumptions and narratives prevail. For example, scholars of literature (myself included) continue to distinguish the first few decades of the nineteenth century as the *early national*, *post-revolutionary*, or *romantic era*. While a preponderance of historical evidence bears out the merits of using these terms, their prevalance has the unintended effect of burying other stories that might be told about the same stretch of time. Worse, it risks delegitimizing voices of opposition or ambivalence, such as the texts by women, black, and Caribbean writers that Colleen C. O'Brien examines in *Race, Romance, and Rebellion: Literatures of the Americas in the Nineteenth Century* (2013), which have been suppressed because they champion visions of nationalism, revolution, and romanticism that contest the male, Anglo-American norm.

Several scholars, including O'Brien, have challenged the dominance of nationalist and revolutionary discourse in the study of nineteenth century literature by examining

texts under a *transnational* or specifically *transamerican*[6] lens. Generally, their work has emanated from departments of English in the United States, and at their best they have undermined the established, Anglo-centric narrative that has insisted on placing the United States at the head of the anticolonial resistance and political innovation that rocked the hemisphere in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Conquest novels, particularly *Jicoténcal*, have occasionally figured into transamerican criticism, including influential studies by Kirsten Silva Gruesz (*Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing*; 2002), Anna Brickhouse (*Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*; 2004), and Gretchen Murphy (*Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of US Empire*; 2005). Generally, these scholars focus on the novel's animation of the familiar Conquest story to instruct Spanish American readers in the risks of not standing together to oppose the imperial advances of foreign nations. However, even these scholars have not recognized the extent to which nineteenth-century writers relied on the Conquest to fill the pages of historical novels. Perhaps the oversight is due to these novels' overwhelming similarities—a casual reader might not find much value in reading more than one of them. Or perhaps it has something to do with the fact that several of these works were authored by men and women who have been forgotten (i.e., Kirk Munroe) or deliberately suppressed because their political affiliations make them unsavory subjects of analysis in the modern liberal academy.

[6] Authors tend to use the latter term to signal the boundaries of their archives: O'Brien's book is a work of *transnational* criticism because it explores texts by men and women who traveled between nations and are difficult to appreciate in an explicitly national frame. However, it is *transamerican* because the authors of these texts were all rooted in the Americas. The term *transamerican* suggests, additionally, that the texts under investigation promote visions of what it means to be *American* (usually as opposed to *European*).

(Interest in Ireneo Paz, for example, has been stymied by his support of the coup that installed the autocratic Porfirio Díaz as President of Mexico.) In any event, the scrutiny *Jicoténcal* has received from the scholars of transamericanism, while enlightening, should not be mistaken as a sign that the academy has adequately charted or analyzed the fictional representation of the Conquest of Mexico in the nineteenth-century novel. This work has hardly begun.

The three texts that I analyze at length were written by authors who were raised in different regions of the New World and approached the Conquest from disparate points of view. Nonetheless, they speak to one another in multiple ways. Most obviously, they share a common plotline and a fascination with indigenous American culture, particularly the artistic, scientific, and political accomplishments of the Aztecs. Drawing on the first-hand accounts of the conquistadors and a multitude of histories and other documents that were compiled in the intervening centuries, they render vibrant portraits of pre-Cortesian life, describe gargantuan temples and colorful festivities, and unfurl moving (if anachronistic) love plots between noble heroes and virtuous maidens[7]. However, overhanging all of the splendors detailed in these texts is the inevability of their destruction. Like ancient tragedies, Conquest novels build sympathy for known historical actors only to hurl them into a predictable series of defeats and humiliations. Following the accounts of the Spanish writers, Moctezuma will be taken prisoner and killed in an exchange between his rioting subjects and the foreigners. The emperor's avengers will

[7] Anachronistic because Aztec men, at least, tended not to practice monogamy. See Hassig's *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest* (2006).

succeed in expelling the conquistadors from Tenochtitlan during the *Noche triste* (Night of sorrows)[8], and the latter will return, accompanied by an army of European reinforcements and indigenous warriors eager to deliver the Aztecs their comeuppance. Within months, Cortés's followers will capture Moctezuma's young successor, Cuauhtémoc, topple the city's sacred monuments, and lay the cornerstone on the colony that will become the seat of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Assuming the role of Governor over this colony, Cortés will formalize his position as one of the most powerful individuals, European or otherwise, in the American hemisphere.

Behind each of these novels is a story worth excavating about an author who discerned in the subjugation of the Aztecs a lesson pertinent to his/her historical moment and believed that this lesson could best be distilled for his/her compatriots through the conventions of the historical novel. As works of historical fiction, Conquest novels display any number of narrative patterns that are present in such classic representatives of the genre as Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814) and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and in the pages that follow I will occasionally remark on these correspondences. However, it is not because these novels confirm (or deny) Scott's or Cooper's influence on the genre that they demand academic scrutiny. Rather, the point of recovering Conquest novels as a discursive formation is to reveal some of the reasons why, at particular historical junctures, New World writers

[8] Spanish historians have given the night this name in recognition of the large number of European men who lost their lives during the retreat from Tenochtitlan. Historians more sympathetic to the Aztecs are less likely to describe the latter's unequivocal triumph over Cortés's army as an occasion for sorrow.

turned to the Conquest plot and the historical novel genre (however they conceived it) to advance their positions in debates of social and political significance. Engaging in what César Salgado calls the work of "archival refashioning," the authors of Conquest novels often "corrected" the Eurocentric accounts of the Conquest to place indigenous characters in a sympathetic light and position the event itself within the domain of American—as opposed to European—history and literature[9]. Of course, these authors were attracted to the Conquest for reasons beyond the contrasts the event suggests between people and institutions born in the New and Old Worlds. As I elaborate in my chapters on Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Guatimozín, último emperador de Méjico* (Guatimozín, the last emperor of Mexico; 1846), Lew Wallace's *The Fair God; or, The Last of the 'Tzins* (1873), and Ireneo Paz's *Amor y suplicio* (Love and torment; 1873), the Conquest of Mexico also offered writers a canvas for deploring the policies of the Spanish Inquisition, assessing the risks of imperialism, and defending the virtues of republicanism.

The Local Imperative in the Study of Historical Novels

Commercially, the three novels I discuss in this dissertation must all be considered successes. *Guatimozín*, after ending its run as a serial in a Spanish journal, was reprinted at least three times in Mexico and in 1898 became the first of this tremendously popular Cuban author's fictional narratives to be translated into English. *The Fair God* and *Amor*

[9] In the spring of 2013, I had the pleasure of auditing Dr. Salgado's course on "Archival Fashioning in Caribbean Literature" at the University of Texas at Austin. The term *archival fashioning*, as he uses it, describes the process whereby Spanish-speaking creoles in the seventeenth through twenty-first centuries have defended their subjectivity and their claims upon American lands by selectively borrowing European discourses (e.g., baroque poetry) and rewriting canonical documents (e.g., Díaz's *Verdadera historia*).

y suplicio, which were researched and written while *Guatimozín* was enjoying the height of its popularity in Mexico and arguably bear this older novel's influence, were for many years after their initial appearance some of the Americas' most lucrative titles[10].

However, as I have researched these works I have been surprised to discover that despite the enthusiasm they elicited in their own eras, the distances they traveled, and the prominence of their authors they have received hardly any recent attention from scholars. Particularly in studies of the historical novel, a genre that specialists are able to position as one of the nineteenth century's most significant forms of literary expression because it generated bestsellers like the texts I discuss, Conquest novels tend to be overlooked or dismissed as generic outliers unworthy of sustained critical focus. As I explain in this section, which takes a brief glance back at the last half-century of criticism on the historical novel, scholars of American literature have failed to take the Conquest novel seriously partly because they assume that the best or most representative historical novels—in short, the novels that deserve to be closely read and analyzed—are the ones that adopt local settings and reference research sources that have been locally authored and/or preserved. This local imperative, as I call it, places an unfair burden of representation on nineteenth-century historical novels, which must make their nationalist allegiances clear or risk being derided as escapist, morally compromised, or poorly

[10] *The Fair God*, according to Wallace's records, sold tens of thousands of copies and for its twenty-fifth anniversary was reprinted in an illustrated—and expensive—deluxe edition. Paz, who self-published *Amor y suplicio* himself, explains in the preface to a later work the difficulty he had printing enough copies of the novel to meet the public's demand (*¡Juárez!* iv).

rendered. Moreover, it prevents modern readers from recognizing the flexibility that drew nineteenth-century writers, especially the subversive ones, to the genre in the first place.

According to a majority of literary historians, the historical novel emerged in the 1810s and rapidly became one of the West's most popular and prestigious literary genres. Georg Lukács, a Marxist and the genre's most famous theorist, credits the rise of the historical novel to the strengthening influence of the European bourgeoise (*The Historical Novel*; 1937). Put simply, he argues that after the French Revolution (1789-1799) the middle-class writers who had been employed previously as historians of the European courts turned their efforts toward documenting a new history of their own class's struggles against aristocratic domination. Positioning the successful Revolution as the culmination of a series of unsuccessful prior rebellions, these intellectuals refuted the argument made by conservatives and gradualists that Louis XVI's execution had been unprecedented and unnecessary. Katie Trumpener ("National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of *Waverley*, 1806-1830"; 1993) has observed that Scott was only one of several nineteenth-century novelists who curated a history of bourgeois uprisings in historical novels. Nevertheless, the Waverley novels that Scott completed between 1814 and his death in 1832 generated the most enthusiasm and praise in Europe and the Americas. Thus, they are generally accepted as the works that popularized the genre in these regions[11].

[11] As Trumpener points out, the remarkably more attention Scott has received from recent scholars has obscured the presence of other novels, many of them authored by women like Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), that addressed similar themes and anticipated the innovations that are attributed to Scott.

Lukács completed *The Historical Novel* in 1937. However, the book remained mostly unknown outside the Eastern Bloc until the second half of the twentieth century, when translations into English (1962) and Spanish (1966) revitalized the global interest in Scott and the historical novel genre[12]. While the scholars who participated in the so-called "Scott revival" of the 1970s-1980s tended to agree that the Waverley novels rose out of the ashes of the French Revolution, they also sought to disentangle the genre from the Marxist's narrow focus on class struggle by isolating other characteristics that would have endeared it to contemporary writers (Shaw 10). For one example, Harry Shaw, the author of *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (1983), abandons Lukács's claim that the historical novel validates middle class identity and instead develops a taxonomy that accounts more generally for the ways that historical fact and literary imagination interact in works of historical fiction. As he writes, whether Scott approached history as "pastoral" (as the backdrop for an original story), "drama" (as the plot for a story grounded in historical fact), or "subject" (as a method to expose master narratives as political constructs), his novels reflect a modern "recognition that societies are interrelated systems which change through time and that individuals are profoundly affected by their places within those systems" (25).

Echoing Shaw's remarks about the historical novel's ability to orient readers to new perceptions of time and modernity, several scholars have argued that Scott's novels resonated with American readers, specifically, because they highlighted the challenges of

[12] Since the late 1800s, realist and modernist critics had tended to dismiss the genre as an unsophisticated and questionably moral form of literary escapism.

living through periods of enormous cultural shift, such as the movement toward national independence after centuries of colonization. George Dekker, the author of *The American Historical Romance* (1987), speaks to this point when he addresses Scott's dialectical arrangement of tradition and progress. As he writes, Scott usually depicts rebellions as a culmination of tensions between groups representing these values, with the reactionaries gaining the reader's sympathy, but the purveyors of progress emerging as the conflict's victors (38). In the context of the New World, Dekker seems to be arguing, the Waverley novels should have encouraged readers to accept the loss of outmoded economic structures and cultural systems (i.e., slavery) as inevitable sacrifices on the hemisphere's path toward modernity, which in the United States meant entrepreneurism and westward expansion. However, as skeptics have argued, depicting both sides of the dialectic in an understanding manner risks causing confusion, as the reader may not understand whether s/he should lament the loss of tradition or embrace the changes demanded by progress[13]. Mark Twain famously lampooned the historical novel's tendency to build the reader's sympathy for chivalric ideals and the martyrs who die defending them in *Life on the Mississippi* (1893), wherein he jests that Scott bears some of the blame for the horrors of the US Civil War (1861-1865). As he reasons, southerners once had been willing to make compromises for the sake of the union. However, after frolicking with the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" and Robin Hood in Scott's novels, they chose to draw lines in the sand and drag

[13] D'Arcy, in *Subversive Scott: The Waverley Novels and Scottish Nationalism* (2005), and Faktorovich, in *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens, and Stevenson* (2013), make this point more forcefully. In their eyes, Scott deliberately lionizes the reactionaries—the Scottish highlanders, in the case of *Waverley*—in an effort to shore up support for Scottish nationalism and other anti-imperial activities.

the whole nation into a bloody war over their indefensible ideals (Dekker 272)[14].

Both Shaw and Dekker would agree that Lukács overstates the importance of the French Revolution[15]. As Dekker points out, American writers were less concerned about dismantling aristocratic privilege than pushing away the yoke of European imperialism, which remained a painful memory in the United States and a perpetual threat in Spanish America (10)[16]. Consequently, writers reared in the New World tended to use historical novels to define themselves as citizens of a nation or hemisphere that was independent from Europe, rather than to legitimate the ascendence of the bourgeoise (a class not all of them would claim as their own). An exception that proves this rule is Paz's *Amor y suplicio*, which defends the social and economic gains made by Mexican mestizos, as I explain in Chapter 3. However, even the Paz novel confirms Dekker's larger point that Americans embraced the historical novel genre to construct stories of national origins. As Noé Jitrik remarks in "De la historia a la escritura" (From history to writing; 1986), the purpose of their search for cultural origins was not to learn "de dónde [la identidad] se procede sino qué es frente a otras identidades, siendo la identidad propia problemática, indecisa, llena de censuras o, por lo menos, constituida por intermitencias" (whence [the identity] comes, but rather what it is in relation to other identities, since [it] is problematic, hazy, stigmatized, or at least, composed of intermittencies; 17/83). In other

[14] Of course, Twain, who was celebrated for these kinds of quips, is forgetting that the Union's victory was not a foregone conclusion. Especially as the Confederacy won one early battle after another, it was unclear which side of the conflict would ultimately prevail.

[15] Lukács opens himself to this criticism by discussing the Leatherstocking novels of Cooper, suggesting that he sees novels written in the Americas as continuations of the bourgeois project initiated by Scott.

[16] Most of Spanish America had seceded from the Spanish Empire by the early 1820s. However, refusing to recognize the sovereignty of its former colonies, the court launched numerous attempts at "re-conquest."

words, the genre's defining characteristic is its past setting, but its goal is to explain how groups of people relate to one another in the present and should relate in the future.

Given the genre's dominance over literary markets during the early national era, it is unsurprising that scholarship on the historical novel would intersect with scholarship on nationalist literature or what Doris Sommer calls foundational fictions[17]. In her book of this same name (1991), Sommer analyzes several historical novels, including *The Last of the Mohicans*, Brazilian author José de Alencar's *O Guaraní* (The Guaraní; 1857) and *Iracema* (1865), and Dominican author Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo* (1882). As she writes, Americans appreciated Scott's attention to men and women who have thrived in the margins of the great European empires, and they admired his capacity for depicting colonized spaces as sites of deep cultural wealth and historical significance. Creole authors such as Cooper, Alencar, and Galván wanted to do for their own homelands what Scott had done for his native Scotland, a region that England had administrated since the early eighteenth century. However, they recognized that Scotland's relation to England differed from their own regions' relations to their past or present colonizers. Specifically, they noted that Scotland had been recognized as a culturally independent area before the Treaty of Union (1706) made it effectively a protectorate of England. Moreover, as a

[17] As her title, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*, indicates, Sommer uses the phrases *foundational fiction*, *national romance*, and even *national novel* interchangeably. Of course, this elides the debates that writers and critics have had about the differences between terms like *romance* and *novel*. In the view of Michael David Bell, the author of *The Development of the American Romance* (1980), these terms are impossible to separate from one another. On one hand, a romance is different from a novel because it emphasizes fiction and fantasy over fact and reality, while, on the other hand, the novel gained respectability by basing itself in distinctly American materials, which ultimately makes its defining characteristic its attention to reality, not fantasy (19). In this dissertation, I occasionally discuss an author's investment in one or the other term, as my analysis of *The Fair God*. However, I refer to the texts under examination as *novels*, a term I prefer because it flows better between the English and Spanish languages.

citizen of post-Revolutionary Europe, Scott could structure his novels around bourgeois values and conceptions of time that were unavailable to writers in the still- or recently-colonized New World. Unable to cast their independence as a return to a prior state of existence, American writers turned to the past only insofar as it could help them steer their present and future. They imitated Scott's research methods, believing that if their historicism was convincing it would bring legitimacy to their texts and nations. However, in their efforts to invest readers in ideas of nationhood and national destiny they also relied on other sources for inspiration. According to Sommer, the foundational fiction is a hybrid genre, imitating the conventions of both the historical novel and the sentimental novel as popularized by François-René de Chateaubriand. From the latter, Americans learned how to manipulate readers by appealing to their hearts and loins. Depicting the heterosexual love shared by two characters representing disparate social groups, the texts Sommer examines moved readers to dismantle the barriers (i.e., racial prejudice) that had prevented the fictional characters from realizing their love for one another. As Sommer puts it, foundational fictions changed readers into patriots by cultivating their "libidinal investment" in unifying the nation and helping it fulfill its destiny (48)[18].

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[18] Like any work of influential criticism, *Foundational Fictions* has found its critics. For example, Bejel, the author of *Gay Cuban Nation* (2001) and González, the author of *The Troubled Union: Expansionist Imperatives in Post-Reconstruction American Romances* (2010), have identified nineteenth-century texts that promoted the reader's sympathetic investment in national progress through depictions of homosexual love and homosocial friendship. Furthermore, Lomnitz, the author of *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico* (2001), argues that the theorists of nationalist literature, including Sommer, perpetuate a fundamentally inaccurate image of the national subject. As he writes, citizens see national identification as a kind of contract that rewards their sacrifices with a bounty of privileges (13-14). In his view, nationalist literature is effective not because it builds sympathy for the suffering of compatriots or invests the reader in abstractions like patriotic duty and national destiny, but rather because it helps readers see the benefits they stand to gain—land, protection, improved social standing—when they tie their own futures to that of the nation.

As I have said, Conquest novels receive remarkably little attention in studies of historical fiction. The same holds true in studies of nationalist literature. Bracketing for the moment the case of Mexico, wherein most of the actions described in these texts take place, I would argue that scholars' lack of interest in fictional accounts of the Conquest betrays their pervasive assumption that novels that are set within the territorial bounds of an author's home nation are somehow more authentic and emblematic of an author's social and political preoccupations—and therefore more deserving of analysis as works representative of the nineteenth-century Americas. To an extent, the privilege that critics bestow on texts with local settings is understandable. As Benedict Anderson, the author of *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), has memorably argued, modern notions of nationhood and patriotism have roots in the creole uprisings of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, and creole writers certainly used novels with local landscapes to defend their autochthonous claims upon the New World. However, this privilege, this master narrative, has distorted readers' perceptions of nineteenth-century literature. Specifically, it has blinded scholars to the rich opportunities the historical novel offered to writers interested in articulating their opposition to the hegemonic discourses of imperialism and nationalism.

Bad Historical Novels: The Case of *Jicoténcal*

The titles I identify as Conquest novels in the Appendix are all historical novels, and as products of the early national era they arguably all shed light on how their authors manipulated the familiar story of Cortés's triumph over the Aztecs to distinguish their

home regions from the rest of the world. However, these texts' absence from most recent discussions of historical and national novels reveals them as the casualties of the local imperative. *Jicoténcal*, the first novel about the Conquest of Mexico, is an instructive example. Published in 1826 by William Stavely, a Philadelphia printer favored by the city's Spanish American refugees because he shared their Catholic faith, the novel is likely not only the first Conquest novel, but also, according to generations of experts, the first historical novel on any subject printed in the Spanish language (Anderson Imbert 221)[19]. Certainly, the book fulfills many of the expectations readers bring to works of historical fiction. It is set in the remote past and blends historical figures like Jicoténcal, Cortés, and Marina/LaMalinche, Cortés's mistress, with invented characters like Teutila, Jicoténcal's wife. It upholds tenets of what Dekker has influentally called the "Waverley-model" of the historical novel, including grouping its characters in binaries: Indians and Spaniards; infidels and Christians; senile politicians and youthful patriots; Spaniards that do and do not approve of Cortés's brutal and manipulative tactics. It revisits a moment of major cultural shift and in doing so reveals "how the past [may] exercis[e] a powerful and sometimes destructive influence on the present" (33). It depicts the beliefs and practices of certain communities, in this case the native groups inhabiting America at the time of

[19] Read, Anderson Imbert, and Jitrik are three prominent scholars of Spanish American literature who affirm *Jicoténcal*'s status as the first historical novel printed in Spanish. There is less consensus, however, surrounding the identity of the novel's author. Some readers, among them Bryant, have assumed the author was a Mexican because the text describes events that took place within Mexico's borders. More recently, critics like Leal and Cortina have argued that the book was authored by a liberal Cuban writer exiled in the city of Philadelphia, such as the pedagogue Félix Varela or the poet José María Heredia. Pushing back against the assumption that the book is the work of an individual author, Brickhouse suggests that it may have been jointly authored by various authors representing several regions of Spanish America (52).

the Conquest, as backward—honorable, perhaps, but incompatible with modernity.

Given these credentials, one might reasonably expect that *Jicoténcal* would hold a hallowed position in appraisals of the historical novel genre, whether in the United States, where it was printed and later reviewed by the poet William Cullen Bryant, or Spanish America, whence its author is believed to have been exiled. However, this is not the case. In studies of US literary history, the novel is most often invoked by scholars of Latina/o studies who use its existence and apparent influence to confirm the viability of the country's early Spanish-language press[20]. Scholars of Spanish American literature seem even less invested in the novel, with their lack of interest excused by the text's refusal to conform to the generic norm. Antonio Benítez-Rojo ("The Nineteenth-Century Spanish American Novel"; 1996) and Raul Ianes Vera (*De Cortés a la huerfana enclaustrada: La novela histórica del romanticismo hispanoamericano*; From Cortés to the cloistered orphan girl: The historical novel in Spanish-American romanticism; 1999), who are two rare examples of Spanish American critics who have cited the book in larger studies of genre, position it as a precursor to better novels and an outlier in the genealogical chain. Similarly, Alejandro González Acosta ("El héroe y las ideas en *Jicoténcal*"; The hero and ideas in *Jicoténcal*; 1996) ventures that it was hurried into print and should be read as a "borrador" (draft) of a more polished work that was left incomplete (108). Taking aim at the author's credibility, the playwright José María Mangino identifies "mamarrachos y deformidades" (misunderstandings and deformities) in the author's references to the local

[20] Scholars have found it difficult to assess the extent of *Jicoténcal*'s initial circulation. However, as Leal and Cortina report, it was the inspiration for a literary competition held in Puebla, Mexico, in 1828 (xvii).

flora and topography (qtd. in Leal and Cortina xx), while Luis Leal and Rodolfo J. Cortina argue that the text reveals "poco o ningún conocimiento" (little to no knowledge) of the Aztecs' language, Nahuatl (xx)[21]. In their own ways, each of these dismissals reinforces the critical consensus that *Jicoténcal* is a noteworthy historical oddity, but not a fully realized historical novel. Particularly in these final remarks by Mangino and Leal and Cortina one observes the doubt that is cast upon a writer's ability to fashion a credible historical novel from events that occurred in a place that is not his/her own. Though they note the author of *Jicoténcal*'s citations of historiographical texts like Solís's *Historia de la conquista de México* (History of the conquest of Mexico; 1684), these critics suggest that the crucial test of an author's talent as a historical novelist is the accuracy with which s/he describes the locations, not the events, evoked in the text.

The consequences of the local imperative that scholars have placed on historical novels published in the Americas are far-reaching, but perhaps the most obvious problem is that it imposes exactly the kinds of ahistorical master narratives that Foucault critiques in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. First, by privileging texts that baldly discuss the "local" or "national," it hardens lines between nations and asserts geographical distinctions that Rafael Rojas (*Las repúblicas del aire: Utopía and desencanto en la revolución de Hispanoamérica*; The republics of air: Utopia and disenchantment in the Spanish American revolution; 2010) and Raúl Coronado (*The World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture*; 2013) have proven did not gain acceptance

[21] As editors of the 1995 republication of the text under the auspices of the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Product, Leal and Cortina obviously find *Jicoténcal* a worthy subject of analysis.

in Spanish America until the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Second, it obscures the importance of commercial success and popularity with readers as signs of a given narrative's influence, raising texts with limited initial circulation like Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) to positions of blinding canonicity and relegating cosmopolitan bestsellers like Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880) to the dustbin of pulp curiosities. Finally, and most surprisingly considering the academy's present interest recovering in the perspectives of writers who have felt persecuted or maligned, it ignores the reasons that authors like Avellaneda (a creole and a woman), Wallace (a humiliated general), and Paz (a journalist highly critical of the central government) might have intentionally buried their subversive commentary in texts that were written to appear frivolous and dissociated from fraught contemporary debates[22]. Scholars like Brickhouse, Lazo, and Murphy have used the geographical ambiguity of *Jicoténcal* to reclaim it as a "hemispheric novel"—that is, as a text more interested in divorcing the New and Old Worlds than in defining the character of a particular American nation. However, even these scholars' enlightening readings of this single and (in their hands) singular text have not repositioned historical novels about the Conquest of Mexico as a vast and coherent formation. It is my argument that Conquest novels, which have borne far more than their share of the criticism skeptics like Twain have lobbed against the historical novel for being escapist and morally compromised, present the scholar with the unique chance to blur some of the lines conventionally drawn

[22] This final issue I discuss at greater length in Chapter 1.

around disciplines and nations in the criticism of nineteenth-century narrative fiction. Perhaps most provocatively of all, they suggest that the inaccuracies, the exoticism, and the cosmopolitanism for which the historical novel has been condemned may in fact constitute some of the genre's most salient and subversive characteristics.

The Conquest Novel as a History of the Nineteenth Century

As I hope my remarks to this point have made clear, I am not interested in gauging how accurately (or not) the novels I discuss render the "facts" of the history of the Conquest of Mexico. Rather, my interest rests largely in the departures they take from the official account of the event that had been maintained by centuries of Eurocentric historiography, much of it authored by historians appointed by the Spanish court to affirm its worldview. To borrow the words of Linda Hutcheon, the author of *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), I seek to explain how Conquest novels "[contest] the presumptive power of history" by drawing attention to the gaps and flaws in the historical record (94). As her title indicates, Hutcheon addresses an archive quite different from the one I am exploring; nevertheless, she observes in postmodern novels like Carlos Fuentes's *Gringo viejo* (The old Gringo; 1985) a willingness to problematize historical discourse that also permeates the nineteenth-century texts that I analyze in this dissertation. Like Fuentes, Conquest novelists discourage readers from feeling nostalgic for the eras they describe (turn-of-the-sixteenth-century Tenochtitlan, no matter how beautifully the author portrays it, is never as a place to return to) and reveal that despite its desire to be accepted as such historiography is neither neutral nor unequivocally true.

Given my interest in Conquest novels as works of imaginative literature, the reader will not be surprised to find the pages following this Introduction filled with close readings of *Guatimozín*, *The Fair God*, and *Amor y suplicio*. Generally, my goal in these readings is to expose and contrast the significance these texts ascribe to the sites and scenes of the Conquest. However, I want to be clear that I am not *uninterested* in history. In fact, I have conceived this project as a work of literary history, and the reader will note that I commit substantial space to placing the Conquest novels I discuss at greatest length in their historical milieu. On the one hand, to return to my discussion of *The Archaelogy of Knowledge*, this is because I believe that in order to understand a text's engagement with the legacy of the Conquest the scholar must expose what Foucault calls the "systems of statements" or "archive" that enabled it to be authored and preserved in the first place (128). However, on the other hand, I am also heeding the advice of genre specialist Philip Gould to read historical novels for their "historicity" (7). As he explains in *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism* (1996), works of historical fiction reveal more about the values and preoccupations of the places and eras in which they were written than the places and eras they describe. Significantly, Gould positions the historical novel as an "autonomous" strain of national history-writing, one that liberal reformers utilized to challenge the status quo. "As a medium for dissent," he explains, "historical romance provided greater flexibility than historiography did, especially for women writers who manipulated literary conventions to critique the contemporary republic" (13). The novels Gould analyzes discuss the Puritan colonies of the Atlantic

Northeast and were printed in the 1820s, including Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829) and Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824). However, his remarks are pertinent to the authors of Conquest novels, who similarly evoke a historical moment that has been accepted as representative of the clash between European and American cultural systems in order to critique the present state of their region or nation. In contrast to Hutcheon's postmodern writers, who reveal the impossibility of conveying the truth through literary and/or historical means, the authors of Conquest novels both identified the problems of past historical accounts and seemed to think they could improve these accounts. If the narratives they constructed were not entirely "correct," they would at least particularize the European perspective and refashion the past to suit the needs of the modern republic.

The readings I offer illuminate not only these authors' historical circumstances, but also their desire to exert an influence over public politics through the conventionally domestic instrument of the romantic novel. Avellaneda, whose *Guatimozín* I analyze in Chapter 1, was raised in the Cuban interior but immigrated to Spain in the late 1830s. Frustrated by the ire her intellectualism inspired in the family of her stepfather, she relocated to Madrid, where she ingratiated herself to the local literati and won the praise of the court. As a young woman, Avellaneda counted among her friends many influential politicians, including the teen-aged Queen Isabel II, whose ascension gave liberals hope that the empire would finally break from the religious intolerance and restrictive policies of the Inquisition. Realizing that Isabel was intellectually unprepared to usher the empire into a new era as an enlightened republic, Avellaneda constructed a novel that would fill

in some of the holes in the queen's superficial education. As a historical novel and a foundational fiction in Sommer's sense of the term, *Guatimozín* was written to grab the attention of a queen who had been raised on the novels of Scott and Chateaubriand. Moreover, it aimed to subversively build Isabel's sympathy for the plight of creoles, who, in the author's view, continued to suffer the same kinds of injustices that Cortés had inflicted upon the Aztecs. As a Cuban, Avellaneda may have felt an urgency to impart lessons of kinship and mercy to the queen on account of the brutality that intellectuals in the vicinity of Havana were facing in the early 1840s for their writings challenging the empire's reliance on Cuban sugar—a crop that devastated the landscape and demanded the importation of large quantities of African slaves. However, Avellaneda's novel also targets European historiography, which she criticizes for paying insufficient attention to American heroes like Cuauhtémoc/Guatimozín, who offered a model of level-headed leadership that Isabel would be wise to emulate in her own actions.

Guatimozín, as scholars such as Concha Meléndez (*La novela indianista en Hispanoamérica [1832-1889]*; 1934), John Lloyd Read (*The Mexican Historical Novel, 1826-1910*; 1939), and Sandra Messinger Cypess (*La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*; 1991) have all noted, was a popular work that lighted new paths for Spanish American writers desiring to represent the hemisphere's indigenous history in works of fiction. However, like *Jicoténcal*, the novel is something of an aberration in that it was written by an author from Cuba, which was already a colony at the time of the Conquest of Mexico (Cortés resided there for eight years) and not a home to any of the

indigenous groups that were subjugated by Cortés and his followers. More often, this particular event was taken up by novelists from the mainland, especially the United States and Mexico. In the former, Conquest novels appeared with the greatest frequency in the 1840s, spurred by the success of William Hickling Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and enthusiasm for the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), and the 1870s-1890s, which saw the country's leaders attempting to overcome the rifts that had caused the Civil War (1861-1865) by turning citizens' attention (south)west, toward territories still ripe for the conquering by white, protestant Anglo-Americans.

The Fair God; or, The Last of the 'Tzins, the subject of Chapter 2, was written by Wallace between the mid 1840s and early 1870s and thus speaks to both eras in US Americans' fascination with "the backward but beautiful country right next door" (Ruiz 23). As a product of the 1840s, the text displays the author's admiration for the historical novels of Scott and especially Cooper, as well as a curious ambivalence about the United States' imperialist designs on Mexico, also emerging around this time. Despite Wallace's love for historical novels, his immediate precedent was Prescott and the other members of the generation of historians that founded the field of Hispanism—the study of Spain and Spanish America—in the United States. While the Hispanists claimed a certain authority over the history of Mexico, arguing that neither the Spanish Empire nor independent Mexico had done its part to protect the archeological sites and archival materials that preserved the memory of the area's indigenous history, they also deplored imperialism, which they associated with the Inquisition and believed was the source of the Spanish

Empire's present unraveling. Carrying on a project initiated by the first generation of Hispanists, Wallace maintains that interference in Mexico's internal affairs should be the province of the intelligentsia, not the military, and that the aim of studying the history of Spain and Spanish America should be to learn from and thus avoid the former's mistakes. Nonetheless, when the novel appeared in 1873, readers overlooked Wallace's cautions about imperial expansion and misconstrued it as a defense of US involvement in Mexico and a nostalgic reminder of the time when northerners and southerners had together wrested away a sizeable chunk of Mexican terrain. Like his realist contemporaries, William Dean Howells and Mark Twain, Wallace believed that novels could repair some of the damage that had been done by the Civil War. However, despite his books' remarkable popularity, he never found the acceptance he desired from realist critics, who perceived his position as a General in the Union Army, his romantic flair, and his novels' foreign settings as signs of amateurism, superficiality, and irrelevance. In the realists' eyes, books like *The Fair God* and its successor, *Ben-Hur*, were further obstacles the nation would have to overcome on its way toward peace, union, and modernity.

In Mexico, the Conquest remained the domain of novels imported from foreign locations (i.e., Spain and the United States) until the 1870s, when local novelists began to address the topic in original works. Generally desiring to unify the republic after decades of political in-fighting had bankrupted it and left it vulnerable to the French Intervention (1861-1867), nationalist writers turned the event into a story of national origins and cultural synthesis. Paz wrote *Amor y suplicio*, the novel I analyze in Chapter 3, during a

tumultuous decade and a half in Mexican history that saw not only the War of the French Intervention and the establishment of the Second Mexican Empire (1864-1867), but also the construction of a liberal constitution (1857); the ascendance of Benito Juárez, the first president of indigenous heritage; and the series of uprisings that resulted from Juárez's refusal to step down. Whether as a soldier on the battlefield or an author with a pen in his hand, Paz played a part in all of these conflicts. A native of Guadalajara, Jalisco, he was a staunch liberal who believed that Mexico would escape civil war and foreign intervention only if it fully embraced a republican form of government. As a young man, he voiced his opposition to "tyrants" like Emperor Maximilian I and Presidents Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in satirical newspapers like *El Payaso* (The Clown; 1865-1865) and *El Padre Cobos* (Father Cobos; 1869-c.1876). However, *Amor y suplicio*, which he wrote at the same time that he was editing these damning denunciations of the nation's leaders, breaks from these papers in tone and genre. As a foundational fiction, the book displays the author's awareness that after leading the nation for half a century the nation's creoles were gradually ceding their power to a rising class of mestizos, as well as his belief that once Mexico found a way to reconcile its racial and political differences it would claim its rightful place in the modern world. As a historical novel, *Amor y suplicio* documents the author's lack of interest in the details of the Conquest, but also his desire to serve as an interpreter of history for the readers, particularly the women and children, who would help him lead the war-torn country toward its unified, republican destiny.

At the top of this Introduction, I wrote that recognizing the Conquest novel as a discursive formation has the potential to decenter some of the master narratives that have long guided the study of nineteenth-century American literature. The specific narrative that I had in mind then was that of nationalism—namely, the suggestion that New World writers desired, above all, to support their regions' independence from Europe and developed literary texts with the primary goal of developing stories of national origins. In this narrative, which insists on a clean delineation not only between Europe and the Americas, but also between the nations located in the Americas, writers who dared to set historical novels in places outside their home regions are traitors to both taste and nation. To the chagrin of critics like Twain, they have abandoned their sacred duty to compose texts that would impart to readers a politically useful sense of themselves as members of a unified nation. Even Paz, probably the most blatantly nationalist of the writers I discuss, suffers from the implicit critical bias against the international, as he was one of the most cosmopolitan Mexicans of his generation and championed the presidency of a man, Diaz, who would "open" Mexico to the world by courting foreign investors and organizing elaborate displays at international exhibitions. Of course, Conquest novels do not reverse this narrative so much as they reveal its limitations and nuances. Among other things, the Conquest novel demonstrates that writers used the conventions of the historical novel to argue in support of political reforms, rather than independence, and that novelists were able to express their pride in their home regions even in texts they set outside those regions. Looking forward to my analyses of the Avellaneda, Wallace, and Paz novels, I

hope the reader will notice how positioning Conquest novels at the center of nineteenth-century literary and political discourse sheds new light not only upon what authors write about, but also upon how access to authorship is determined and why so many authors have elected to write in a literary genre so ballyhooed as the historical novel.

Chapter 1: Writing the Queen and Country: *Guatimozín, último emperador de Méjico* (1846) by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda

> El talento y extraordinario valor que mostró el joven rey en la heroica defensa de la ciudad imperial… hacen más vivo el deseo de conocer su vida anterior y los antecedentes que le condujeron a la elevación de la que le precipitaron los conquistadores. Este deseo me ha obligado a registrar cuidadosamente cuantos libros se han publicado sobre México, así en Europa como en América; y si las noticias que doy no son perfectamente exactas, puedo creer al menos que son verosímiles y no infundidas.
>
> (The talent and valor which the youthful king displayed in his defense of the imperial city… make more lively the desire to know his former life and the antecedents which conducted him to that elevation from which the Spaniards precipitately hurled him. This desire has compelled [me] to carefully examine all the books that have been published upon Mexico, both in Europe and America; and if my statements concerning Guatimozín are not perfectly exact, at least they are very near the truth, and founded on fact.)
>
> Avellaneda, *Guatimozín* (168/125)

Avellaneda as Cronista Mayor (Official Historian)

Though Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda was born in Puerto Príncipe (now Camagüey), Cuba, and is enshrined alongside José María Heredia, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido), and José Martí as one of Cuba's significant pre-national authors, she did not always depict the hemisphere of her birth in her fictional writings. In fact, the autobiographical romance *Sab* (1841) and *Guatimozín, último emperador de Méjico* (Guatimozín, the last emperor of Mexico) are the only two of the novels the

author completed over the course of her long and prolific literary career that are set in the New World[1]. Nonetheless, the novel is one of the first works of fiction by a Spanish American author to reimagine the events leading up to the Conquest of Mexico. It is also one of the first works in any national tradition to place the figure of Cuauhtémoc/Guatimozín[2], the emperor who surrendered Tenochtitlan to Hernán Cortés in 1521, at the center of the action. As Avellaneda points out, the accounts of European historiographers like Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, and Solís do not mention the name *Cuauhtémoc* until after the young emperor ascends the throne. Even then, they omit the biographical details that one might expect to find alongside the first mention of a man who played such a pivotal role in the event's history. To Avellaneda's chagrin, the European chronicles focus on the emperor's youth and the tortures he suffered while in Cortés's custody, including having his hands and feet bathed in oil and roasted over a hot fire for not being able to lead them to a stockpile of gold and precious stones.

Like the novel *Jicoténcal*, which I discussed in the Introduction, *Guatimozín* tends to figure into the scholarship of the Spanish American historical novel as a generic precursor. Certainly, publishing companies have encouraged readers to approach the text as a historical novel in the vein of Scott's *Waverley*, as they have often printed the words

[1] Of Avellaneda's six novels, four are considered historical novels, and *Guatimozín* is the only one of these four to be set outside of the European continent. The other three historical novels are *Espatolino* (1844), which is set in Italy, *Dolores, páginas de una crónica familiar* (Dolores, pages from a family chronicle; 1851), which is set in Spain, and *El artista barquero, o Las cuatro cinco de junio* (The boatman artist, or The four fifths of June; 1861), which is set in France.

[2] The name *Guatimozín* is a conjunction of *Guatimoc* (a Hispanicized version of *Cuauhtémoc*) and *tzin* (a Nahuatl suffix expressing nobility). To avoid confusion, I use *Cuauhtémoc* to refer to the historical figure and *Guatimozín* to refer to the character of Avellaneda's creation that appears in the novel.

"novela histórica" (historical novel) on its title page[3]. In accordance with this marketing designation, scholars including Concha Meléndez and John Lloyd Read have positioned the text as one of the region's paradigmatic historical novels, and recent critics like Raúl Ianes Vera have not challenged their assessment.

Guatimozín indeed resembles *Waverley*, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and other popular historical novels with which the author was undoubtedly familiar. Like these other works, it describes a colonized group's unsuccessful gambit to overthrow its colonizer, and it is fluent in the romantic idiom that prevailed in the West in the early nineteenth century[4]. However, it is important to note that the author herself wore the mantle of *historical novelist* uncomfortably. During her lifetime, she took greater pride in her plays and poems. Moreover, she distanced herself from the act of writing historical novels by claiming in her letters and critical writings that she lacked experience with the genre, which the Spanish literati still tended to dismiss as a diversion for women and children, and insisting that her intentions somehow differed from those of contemporary writers like Victor Hugo and Honoré de Balzac, whom she believed reveled in depicting scenes of depravity and squalor: "Poeta antes que todo" (A poet above all else), she wrote in 1857, "yo amo lo bello, y […] siento repugnancia invencible por esas *anatomías*,

[3] After the novel completed its run as a serial, it was republished in four volumes by the Imprenta D. A. Espinosa y Compañía. The phrase "novela histórica" appears not only on this edition but on most editions of the novel that have been published in Spain and the Americas since 1846.

[4] Harter, one of Avellaneda's biographers, writes that although she "avoids excessive neo-medievalism, she remains true to other fundamentally romantic tenets, themes, and characteristics already found in her poems and plays. Love is a constant and predominant motif, appearing as a natural and spontaneous passion, striking with all the force and suddenness of a bolt of lightning, affecting every aspect of the lover's life and feeling. It lifts the individual to the heights of ecstasy and plunges him or her into the depths of despair. Sublime and terrible, it transcends every other consideration, even morality, at least temporarily" (121).

cuando sólo se hacen para presentar asquerocidades" (I love what is beautiful, and […] I feel insurmountable disgust for those *anatomies* when they are done only to depict grotesquerie; qtd. by Picon Garfield 40)[5].

Furthermore, there is evidence that Avellaneda felt that calling her account of the Conquest of Mexico a "historical novel" did not fully reflect the project she was undertaking in the text. In 1844, she wrote to her beau Gabriel García Tassara that she had completed the first half of the book and hoped that he would serialize it in the paper he was editing, *El Tiempo* (The Times). Curiously, she describes the new work as a "novela semipoema" (semi-poetic novel) and an "estudio profundo de la historia de la conquista" (deep study of the history of the Conquest) before venturing that it is "digna de figurar al lado de las buenas novelas históricas" (worthy of standing beside the good historical novelas; qtd. in Cotarelo 131-132). Scholars have reprinted these quotations to argue one or another point about the author's goals for writing the book, but they have not, to my knowledge, observed the light they each shed on the novel's form. From the perspective of a twenty-first-century reader, the first two comments may seem to contradict the text's claim to be a historical novel because they cite genres not commonly associated with narrative fiction (poetry and "deep" historical study). However, in the nineteenth century such distinctions between poetry and prose, and history and fiction, were not as firm as they arguably are today. Thus, when Avellaneda says that the book is

[5] This dismissal of Hugo in 1857 represents a certain evolution in the author's thinking since the late 1830s and early 1840s. As scholars including Nara Araújo, the author of *Visión romántica del otro: Estudio comparativo de Atala y Cumandá, Bug-Jargal y Sab* (Romantic vision of the other: A comparative study of *Atala* and *Cumandá*, *Bug-Jargal* and *Sab*), have pointed out, Avellaneda's first novels bear a considerable debt to Hugo's first novel, *Bug-Jargal* (1826).

"semi-poetic," she means that it emphasizes what is beautiful, not grotesque, in the Conquest. When she says that it is a "deep study," she means that like *Waverley* it borrows details that may be verified by skeptics because they appear in physical documents. In other words, rather than indicate that *Guatimozín* is something *other* than a historical novel, these words distinguish *Guatimozín* as a *certain kind* of historical novel—namely, a "good" one that will not tarnish the name of the author or journal. Aware that Tassara (a member of the lettered elite) holds historical fiction in low esteem, she writes that she has "corregido, limado y relimado" (corrected, polished, and polished again) the genre's style and that the text will leave readers an "airoso" (jovial) feeling despite its heavy themes (qtd. in Cotarelo 132). Unfortunately, these promises proved futile: Tassara passed on *Guatimozín*, and the novel made its first appearance in the Madrid paper *El Heraldo* (The Herald) beginning on February 20, 1846.

Typically, scholars have explained Avellaneda's decision to write a historical novel about the Conquest of Mexico as a result of the genre's popularity with mid-nineteenth-century readers (if not critics) and the opportunity that the Conquest topic presented her to insert her own perspective as a creole woman into a historical discourse that had been dominated by peninsular men for well over three centuries. Giving voice to the majority perspective on this issue, Ianes writes that *Guatimozín* is "un claro ejemplo de cómo la ficción puede llegar a suplir la carencia o las lagunas de los textos históricos" (a clear example of how fiction can compensate for the absence or the gaps in the historical texts; 130). One of the obvious "gaps" that Avellaneda fills surrounds the figure

of the Emperor Cuauhtémoc, who ascended the throne in 1520 and led such a fierce resistance against the interloping Spaniards and their allies that he nearly prevented Tenochtitlan from falling into Spanish hands. The eye-witness accounts of Cortés and Díaz offer scant information about Cuauhtémoc's character, except to state that he was young when he became the leader of the Aztec Empire—probably no more than 20 or 25 years old[6]. As Avellaneda argues, it is unlikely that the Aztecs would have placed such a young man on the throne at a time of such great need had he not distinguished himself as a warrior and leader in the earlier battles against Cortés. How could the actions of such a remarkable prince have escaped the attention of the European chroniclers until he became the emperor? In her view, the lack of interest that these authors of history have shown in this "personaje que tanto figura después en la historia de la conquista" (personage who figured so largely afterwards in the history of the Conquest) reveals a telling deficit in the peninsula's record of its dealings with the American colonies (168/125). As scholars including Ianes have argued, this deficit was a source of frustration for creoles like Avellaneda who longed to see their American perspective reflected in the official record of European colonization. As I point out later in this chapter, it also had deleterious consequences for monarchs and members of the imperial Spanish court, who had inherited a view of colonial history that was one-sided and inaccurate. It interfered with Spain's ability to govern the few American colonies that remained within its clutches.

[6] Avellaneda states that Cuauhtémoc/Guatimozín was 22 when he ascended the throne. However, this is her conjecture: historians have not reached a consensus on the emperor's exact age at the time of coronation.

Contemplating the scope of Avellaneda's research and her use of footnotes to "resolve" the inconsistencies that she located in the canonical histories, Evelyn Picon Garfield writes the following:

> Como si fuera cronista también, Avellaneda corrige datos erróneos; compara comentarios entre los cronistas sobre el mismo hecho, suceso, o palabra indígena y opta por ciertos detalles en lugar de otros; anota discrepancias de fechas y comentarios contradictorios del mismo cronista; y critica a todos por la falta de información genealógica sobre Guatimozín. De esta manera, a través de la narración y las notas explicativas al pie de la página, la autora sostiene una especie de diálogo con los primeros cronistas de América, imitándolos cuando los critica—como lo había hecho Díaz del Castillo con Gómara, Solís con Las Casas o Clavijero con Robertson.
>
> (As though she too were a chronicler, Avellaneda corrects factual errors; she compares commentaries among the chroniclers concerning the same facts, events, or indigenous words, and opts for certain details in the place of others; she notes discrepancies in dates and contradicting remarks that appear in the same chronicle; and she criticizes them all for their lack of genealogical information about Guatimozín. In this manner, through the narration and the explanatory notes at the foot of the page, the author sustains a kind of dialogue with the first American chroniclers, imitating them as she criticizes them—just as Díaz del Castillo had done with Gómara, Solís had done with Las Casas, or Clavijero had done with Robertson; 43)

The point Picon Garfield is making is that Avellaneda pored over the historiographical materials available to her in Madrid and used the contradictions between them to justify inventing a new account of the Conquest that was, in her creole perspective, more balanced and thorough. This is evident in the long footnote in Book 2, Chapter 1, which reconstructs the lineage of Cuauhtémoc (absent in the histories by European authors) through references to documents by creole and indigenous authors. However, like the author's 1844 letter to Tassara, Picon Garfield's words raise the pivotal question of

Guatimozín's genre: Is it a historical novel in the tradition of Scott and Cooper, as readers have assumed? Or is it a chronicle in the tradition of Díaz's *Verdadera historia de la conquista de Nueva España* (True history of the conquest of New Spain; completed before the author's death in 1584; published in 1632) and Solís's *Historia de la conquista de México* (History of the Conquest of Mexico; 1684)?

Picon Garfield's use of the past subjunctive tense ("As though she too were a chronicler") suggests that for some reason the author could not be composing a historical novel *and* a chronicle at the same time, and it is a good example of the kind of either/or distinction that genre analysis tends to impose upon texts like *Guatimozín* that might best be described as multi-generic[7]. The answer, of course, is that Avellaneda drew on both styles of writing. Here, it is helpful to recall Roberto González Echevarría's remark in *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1990) that unlike the epic the novel does not have conventions that are endemic to it as a genre. As he writes,

> The most persistent characteristic of books that have been called novels in the modern era is that they always pretend not to be literature… *Don Quixote* is supposed to be the translation of a history that is written in Arabic, or of documents extracted from the archives of La Mancha; [and] *La vida de Lazarrilo Tormes* is a deposition written for a judge… Other novels are or pretend to be autobiographies, a series of letters, a manuscript found in a trunk, and so on (7).

By taking on the appearance of another kind of text, one that readers have been conditioned to believe conveys "the truth," novels achieve two aims: First, they gain

[7] Schlau, for instance, quotes the same lines from Picon Garfield, but in order to dismiss the latter critic's suggestion that Avellaneda was attempting to write a chronicle. Schlau's insistence that *Guatimozín* is a historical novel is confusing since one of her book's overarching arguments is that women's writing is difficult to place into patriarchal, pre-defined genres. As she writes in her introduction, texts by women writers are characterized by "the appropriation and redesigning of traditional genres" (vxii).

legitimacy for themselves as vehicles for their own truth statements: "In that legitimation of the voice in the present lies the creation of the novelistic voice, capable of recording events that have not been consecrated by literary or rhetorical creation" (70). Second, they draw attention to the fact that truth is a construct and suggest that no text, literary or otherwise, is inherently more truthful than another (8).

In the mid nineteenth century, a discourse that carried great truth value for Western readers was history[8]. The European bourgeoisie employed the discourse of history to validate the French Revolution as the inevitable culmination of the uprisings that the poor and middle classes had been leading against a corrupt aristocracy for centuries. In contrast, American patriots used the discourse of history to legitimate their rebellions against their European colonizers, and historians constructed accounts of the hemisphere's pre-Cortesian and colonial past in their efforts to fend off the anxiety that they were inhabiting national spaces that had "no history" and did not yet exist. Scott's novels became stunning international bestsellers because they resonated with readers in both hemispheres. Consider the case of *Waverley*. In Europe, bourgeois readers would have shared the Scottish rebels' disdain for the English court, the latter a symbol of centuries of aristocratic domination over the middle classes. In the Americas, patriotic readers would have cheered the Catholic Scots' resistance to a distant, Protestant court that used their cultural differences as a reason to deny them autonomy over their own

[8] The truth-bearing discourse that González Echevarría identifies in the novels of the nineteenth century is that of *travel* (inspired, for example, by popular travelogues by Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin). However, as scholars ranging from Lukács to Sommer have confirmed, the discourse of *history*, which increasingly took the form of a *historical narrative*, was also accepted by the era's readers as a voice of truth and an instrument of power.

regions. In any case, it is no surprise that Avellaneda would model her intervention in Spanish colonial discourse after the historical novels of Scott, as they demonstrated how effectively progressive ideas could be conveyed through historical narratives.

If Avellaneda had simply wanted to legitimate anti-colonial rebellions, then she could have dramatized any number of uprisings by the New World's Indians, slaves, and Creoles. *Waverley*, which discusses a short-lived revolt that was not well remembered even in Scotland by the time the book appeared, had certainly demonstrated that historical novels need not relate events that are familiar to the reader in order to move him or her to tears. By addressing the relatively well-known events leading up to the Conquest of Mexico, the author deliberately places herself in conversation with the astonishingly large number of historiographers who addressed the topic before the 1840s. She *dares* her readers to draw comparisons between these earlier accounts and her own.

The fact that so many writers composed Conquest histories even before the discourse of history claimed its position as truth in the social imaginary speaks not only to an abiding interest in the topic, but also to the Spanish government's will to retain control over the spread of information about its colonial processes. Excluding Cortés, Díaz, and the other Europeans who participated in the Conquest and recorded letters and memoirs describing the events they witnessed in person, the first Conquest historians tended to be secretaries of the king. In 1571, Ferdinand II established a position for a *Cronista mayor de las Indias* (Official Historian of the Indies), whose responsibilities

included safeguarding archived documents and using them to compose general histories. The job's duties were explained in the document establishing the position as follows:

> Porque la memoria de los hechos Memorables y señalados que a auido y vviere en las yndias, se construe, el coronista cosmographo de yndias baya siempre escriuiendo la historia general dellas con la mayor Precision y verdad que ser pueda, de las costumbres, Ritos y antiguedades, hechos y acontecimientos que se entendieron, por las descripciones historicas y otras Relaciones y auerigaciones que se enuiaren a nos, en el consejo; la cual historia este en el, sin que de ella se pueda publicar ni dejar leer Mas de aquello, que a los que el consejo pareceiere que sea publicado.
>
> (So that the memory of deeds that are significant and worthy of recollection which have taken place and will take place in the Indies be preserved, the chronicler-cosmographer of the Indies should always be engaged in writing their general history, with as much precision and truthfulness as possible. He should write about the customs, rituals and myths of the people that are known through descriptions, histories and other accounts [*relaciones*] and enquiries sent to us at the Council [of the Indies]. Said history should be in his possession, no publication thereof being made, nor any part be read except what the Council deems should be made public. González Echevarría's translation; 63)

The first general history by a *Cronista mayor*, the *Descripción de las Indias* (Description of the Indies), appeared in 1601 and was written by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas. González Echevarría describes the text "as monumental a task of re-writing as has perhaps ever been accomplished" (64). However, as the job description indicates, rewriting is exactly the task for which the author was hired. In the *Descripción* and its sequel, the *Décadas* (Decades; 1601-1615), Herrera rewrites the accounts of Cortés, Díaz, and others, just as Herrera's successor, Solís, would go on to rewrite the *Décadas* in his own *Historia de la conquista de México* three quarters of a century later.

As Lukács explains, court-appointed historians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tended to be middle-class writers who won the court's favor and saw the position with its promise of financial stability as a reward for their work. Following the tenets of Enlightenment historicism, these authors tended to see rewriting history as a pedagogical labor. Their texts were useful insofar as the historical events they recorded served as lessons to the courts that read them. Often, these writers encouraged readers to avoid acts of tyranny that previous leaders had committed with disastrous results. (Cortés's subjugation of Tenochtitlan, which led to the slaughter and enslavement of hundreds of thousands of indigenous people, is one example.) Though the last *Cronista mayor de las Indias* was appointed in the 1700s, well before Avellaneda's birth, the author would have grasped through her study of the successive histories the role the *Cronista mayor* played in moderating the relationship between Spain and its colonies. She would have observed that each *Cronista mayor* built on the work of his predecessor, integrating new details, perspectives, and methodologies as they became available and updating the style and content of the history to accommodate the needs and interests of a new era. With *Guatimozín*, Avellaneda steps into the role of *Cronista mayor* in order to deliver a lesson on just colonial leadership in the Spanish Caribbean. If imitating the popular novels of Scott would attract readers to her account of the Conquest of Mexico, then by rewriting the texts by Díaz, Solís, and others she would she would earn respect for her own perspective and cast doubt upon the earlier historians' claims on the truth.

The *Guatimozín* scholarship that I have referenced so far has emphasized the text's position in the evolution of the historical novel—as an echo of *Waverley* and a precursor to later historical novels by Spanish American authors like Eligio Ancona and Ireneo Paz. Regrettably, however, scholars have not appreciated the text as an ambitious work of Conquest historiography in itself. While I do not want to discount the research of Picon Garfield, Ianes, and others, which has revealed the stakes in Avellaneda's project, I do believe that it is valuable to shift the focus from *Guatimozín* as a work of historical fiction to *Guatimozín* as an instructive history that was destined for the members of the Spanish court and most of all for Avellaneda's young friend—Queen Isabel II.

Thus, in the following sections of this chapter, I shall not argue that *Guatimozín* is more a "history" than a "historical novel." Rather, heeding González Echevarría's warning not to impose distinctions between literary and nonliterary genres, I suggest that in her unofficial capacity as *Cronista mayor de las Indias* Avellaneda sought to update the old histories of the Conquest of Mexico to include a specifically creole perspective, and that integrating the conventions of the romantic historical novel (domestic subplots, etc.) was one crucial method she used to achieve this modernization. Dekker, in *The American Historical Romance*, states that Scott's novels revitalized not only the writing of fiction, but also the writing of history. As he explains,

> Scott departed from the normal practice of eighteenth-century historians by visiting scenes of historical events, the better to understand them with precision….In [Thomas Babington] Macaulay's and perhaps even more impressively in [Francis] Parkman's masterpieces we can see how the great Romantic historians assimilated and disciplined Scott's historicism,

> his research methods, and his narrative techniques in works of history which are also major works of art (30).

Like Scott, Avellaneda turns episodes that had been recorded in meticulous detail into a riveting adventure story with dynamic protagonists like the emperor, Guatimozín, and his wife. Though she diverges from the other venerated chroniclers in certain ways, Avellaneda probably did not see her emendations as a *fictionalization* of history, but rather as a *translation* of history into the powerful modern vernacular of historical fiction.

To suggest some of the ways that growing up in Cuba might have shaped the literary texts she composed as an adult enjoying the privileges of the Spanish court, I continue this chapter with a discussion of the circumstances in colonial Cuba during the author's childhood and the violence that colonial officials leveled against the first waves of creole intellectuals, among them the Havanan men who attended the literary salons of Domingo Del Monte. After that, I turn my attention to Madrid, where in the early 1840s Avellaneda had reached the height of her popularity as a writer and had become a close affiliate of the imperial court. To return to the 1844 letter to Tassara, I argue that Avellaneda felt that she was writing something more, or at least something *different*, than the kinds of superfluous, pseudo-historical novels that bourgeois women and children were consuming at the time with lusting indiscretion. Rather, I prove with reference to the author's contemporary engagements that she composed *Guatimozín* with a specific reader in mind: the young Queen Isabel II, who was installed upon the Spanish Imperial throne by a military coup in 1843, not long after the author's own move to the metropole, and who was poorly prepared to exercise the power that she suddenly found within her

grasp. With this book, Avellaneda rewrites an account of a foundational moment in Spanish history that aims to build the queen's sympathy for the plight of the creoles under her power and cultivate her desire to avoid repeating the tyrannical acts that had defined the empire's interactions with its colonies throughout the era of the Inquisition. My reading does not contradict the readings offered by the text's previous scholars so much as it lends them depth. One way to distinguish my arguments in this chapter from the others that have preceded it is to think of them as inquiring into intended rather than unintended audiences: Though, as Ianes, Read, Sandra Messinger Cypess, and others have argued, *Guatimozín* would eventually come to mean a great deal to American readers like the Mexican readers that I discuss in Chapter 3, it was intended first and foremost for the inexperienced and insufficiently educated Queen of Spain.

The Historical Novel at the Dawn of Cuban Literary Narrative, 1834-1844

When slave revolts in Saint-Domïngue (Haïti) disrupted the French colony's agricultural production in the 1790s, enterprising landowners in Havana saw an opportunity to expand their own role in the global sugar market. As Antonio Benítez Rojo explains in "Power/Sugar/Literature: Toward a Reinterpretation of Cubanness" (1986)[9], taking over for Saint-Domïngue as the world's foremost producer of sugar quickly brought the island

[9] The essay appeared in *Cruz Ansata* (Handled Cross), in the original Spanish, in 1986. That same year, an expanded version translated into English by Jorge Hernández Marín also appeared in *Cuban Studies*. I cite the latter version because it offers a longer and more thorough explication of the author's arguments.

immense wealth and fame[10]. However, it also reinforced the islanders' sense that they inhabited a space that was culturally and economically separate from Spain though it fell within the empire's geographical borders[11]. In 1834, a group of creoles including José Antonio Saco and Domingo Del Monte stirred controversy by announcing their intention to found an Academy of Letters in Havana. Though these creoles lived in close association with the city's sugar-growing elites (Del Monte was married to a planter's daughter), they had begun to question whether sustaining a saccharocracy[12] that drained the island's resources and required the constant importation of African slaves to complete the labors associated with the sugar mill was in their best interests. Among other things, they complained that young men had to leave the island to attain an education and that the slave trade was "blackening" society and leaving Cuba vulnerable to the kinds of slave rebellions that had overrun Saint-Domïngue half a century earlier. The area's landowners repudiated the idea of establishing the Academy because they anticipated that it would grant institutional validity to the arguments that the incipient Cuban literati were

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[10] Prior to the nineteenth century, Cuba mostly cultivated tobacco. In *Cuban Counterpoint*, Ortíz writes that Columbus first sighted tobacco on the island of Cuba, though the crop likely originated on the mainland and was transported to the island by the Tainos. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cuban tobacco faced competition from tobacco cultivated in other areas like the Carolinas, but even as the island scaled back its production of tobacco to focus on sugar Cuban cigars remained desirable products in Europe and North America in part because smoking them was considered a sign of prosperity See pp. 283-309.

[11] In the words of Paquette, the author *of Sugar Is Made with Blood* (1988), sugar manufacture made Cuba the "Crown jewel" of the Spanish Empire (218). As he reports, between 1770 and 1840, the value of Cuban exports rose from $759,000 to $21,481,000, and by 1840 the value of the commerce carried out on the island surpassed the value of the commerce that was carried out in peninsular Spain (30).

[12] The words *saccharocracy* and *sugarocracy* are often invoked to describe Cuban sugar cultivation. Both terms allude to the elite status of sugar plantation owners, particularly the owners of plantations in the area of Havana, as well as to the Spanish Empire's insistence that Cuba grow sugar to the exclusion of other crops. The lack of agricultural diversity, which forced the island's inhabitants to import all other foods from other places, is one of several reasons Del Monte and other islanders questioned the institution.

likely to make against slavery and the continuation of the saccharocracy (22). Eventually, the landowners convinced the colonial government to defend their position using what Benítez Rojo describes as "authoritarian" means (15): The Captain-General declared that no further discussion of an Academy was to take place, and when Saco violated the prohibition a few weeks later, he was ruthlessly exiled to Trinidad (23).

After Saco's departure, Del Monte abandoned his dreams of establishing an Academy and began assembling Havana's promising young writers in his own home[13]. As many scholars have observed, a number of the texts these authors composed under Del Monte's tutelage depict Cuban slaves and their masters. These include the narrative of the slave Juan Francisco Manzano, whose freedom Del Monte personally arranged[14];

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[13] Scholars have questioned Del Monte's reasons for bringing these writers together. Admirers like Benítez Rojo typically argue that Del Monte desired to be a mentor to a new generation of writers that would spread awareness of the dangers posed by the saccharocracy, while skeptics like Antón Arrufat ("El nacimiento de la novela en Cuba"; The birth of the novel in Cuba; 1990) and the novelist Leonardo Padura (*La novela de mi vida*; The novel of my life; 2002) suggest that he wanted to claim credit for helping along younger writers whose talents clearly surpassed his own. I read Arrufat's essay, which appeared in 1990, as a direct response to "Sugar/Power/Literature." In brief, Arrufat argues that for a man who prided himself as an authority on letters Del Monte published remarkably few original works under his own name, and that the works he did complete were not novels or stories, but poems and essays. Considering the thinness of Del Monte's *ouevre*, Arrufat concludes that Del Monte is an outsider (or critic) who spoke about novel-writing from the "margen" (margin) and whose over-inflated sense of self-importance led him to take excessive credit for the achievements of the more talented writers who attended his salons (749). Underlying Arrufat's criticism is the conviction that Del Monte—who was born in Venezuela, referred to himself as a Spaniard, and did not himself publish a single novel or short story—is an unacceptable point of origin for a genealogy of Cuban narrative fiction. However, whatever scholars have had to say about Del Monte's motives and his impact as a mentor and editor, they agree that the texts that emerged from his salons subverted the discourses of slavery and sugar manufacture and expressed pride in belonging to a community of explicitly *Cuban* reformers.

[14] Scholars have debated Del Monte's reasons for helping arrange Manzano's freedom. In "La intelectualidad negra en Cuba en el siglo XIX: El case de Manzano," Labrador Rodríguez offers evidence that Del Monte raised the money to purchase Manzano's freedom on the condition that he write an account of his life as a slave. Del Monte, who opposed the importation of slaves because he believed their presence in Cuba degraded the island's cultural life, passed the text on to the British abolitionist Richard Madden with the hope that it would help foreign governments pressure the Spanish Empire to put an end to slavery.

the short story "Petrona y Rosalía" (Petrona and Rosalía; 1837) by Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel; and the novel *Francisco: el ingenio o, Las delicias del campo* (Francisco: the sugar mill or, The delights of the countryside; 1838-1839) by Anselmo Suárez y Romero. While these texts offer valuable insight into the harms that mid-century Cuban reformers saw in slavery, they also raise uncomfortable questions about the individual writers' motives for opposing the institution. Del Monte, for example, was a wealthy man who did not oppose slavery because it was unjust but because it brought white Cubans within close physical proximity to degraded black slaves. Once, in a letter to Tanco, he wrote:

> Los negros en la isla de Cuba son nuestra poesía, y no hay que pensar en otra cosa, pero no los negros solos, sino los negros con los blancos, todos revueltos y formar los cuadros, las escenas, que a la fuerza han de ser infernales y diabólicas, pero ciertas y evidentes.
>
> (The blacks on the island of Cuba are our poetry, and there is no need to think anything else, but not the blacks alone, but rather the blacks with the whites, all mixed up, forming the portraits, the scenes, that by force must be infernal and diabolical, but also correct and evident. My translation; qtd. by Benítez Rojo, "¿Cómo…" 62).

Accordingly, his primary objection to the saccharocracy—an institution from which he gained much personal benefit—was that it kept men of business, and not men of letters, in control of the island's resources. It is probably true, as Ileana Rodriguez has written, that Del Monte simply reflected "los vicios y virtudes de su clase, de su época de su historia nacional" (the vices and virtues of his class in his historical moment; 51). Even so, the closer one looks at his biography and correspondence, the harder one finds it to

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He also shared the narrative with writers who attended his salons. The events and characters in Suárez's *Francisco* are clearly inspired by Manzano's narrative.

argue that he inspired the rather more radical abolitionist and separatist thought that scholars detect in the texts by Manzano, Tanco, and Suárez, as well as in Cirilo Villaverde's novel *Cecilia Valdés, o La loma del ángel* (Cecilia Vadés, or Angel Hill), which circulated in a preliminary form in the 1830s and would receive its definitive treatment in 1882, long after the author had taken up residence in New York City.

One way to affirm Del Monte's influence on the young authors who gathered under his roof without losing track of their ideological differences (both between themselves and with their readers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) is to turn from focusing on the topics they represented (i.e., slavery) to the conventions of the genre in which they typically wrote. What makes the novels and short stories produced under Del Monte's supervision worth studying as a discursive formation is not only that they oppose colonial structures like slavery and sugar manufacture, or that they achieve this through the tactical depiction of novel slaves, absent masters, and debased drivers, but that they also draw heavily upon the conventions of the historical novel as it was popularized by Scott in the first half of the nineteenth century. Del Monte's interest in the historical novel dates at least as far back as 1830, when he received a letter from the Spanish journalist Ángel Iznardi asking him to recommend a good translation of *Ivanhoe* (Del Monte; *Centón* 165)[15]. Two years later, Del Monte published in the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (Bimonthly Cuban Magazine), the official journal of the Sociedad Patriótica (Patriotic Society) of Cuba an essay praising the novels of Scott, Cooper, and Alessandro

[15] Cairo, in an introduction to a Echevarría's *Antonelli*, says Del Monte annotated a translation of *Ivanhoe* in 1829. However, I have found neither the annotation nor any other reference to it. See p. 7.

Manzoni that reveals his familiarity with these writers' works and anticipates several of Lukács's observations in his classic study of the historical novel genre.

Providing the occasion for Del Monte's 1832 essay was the publication of two new Spanish-language novels and a Spanish translation of a novel originally written in English. All three of these books confirm the author's opinion that Spanish literature had fallen into a state of decadence. Why, he asks, must all the novels that are worth reading be imported from other countries? Why do Spanish writers not follow the examples of Scott, Cooper, and Manzoni and write novels valorizing their own country's history? After all, he writes, the history of Spain offers rich material for the imagination:

> No hay más que acordarse de don Fernando III, de Alfonso el Sabio, de don Pedro el Justiciero o el Cruel, de Isabel la Católica y el espléndido acompamiento de capitanes valentísimos y discretos letrados de su corte, para conocer y estimar la superioridad de materiales que a su disposición tendría el novelista español.
>
> (One need only acquaint oneself with Don Fernando III, Alfonso the Wise, Peter the Just [or Cruel], Isabel the Catholic, and their courts' splendid accompaniments of valiant captains and prudent men of letters to learn and judge the superiority of materials at the disposition of the Spanish novelist; 142).

Del Monte's list of suggested topics does not include the Conquest or any other event that occurred in the New World, possibly indicating that his sense of himself as a *Cuban* was still in a preliminary stage of development (the battle over the Academy of Letters would not be fought for another two years). Still, the essay confirms Del Monte's attention to what was then one of the West's most popular and innovative literary genres and that he grasped what Lukács says is one of the guiding principles of the historical novel: He

understood that historical novels depict past events so that present readers may "comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned" (Lukács 24).

According to Del Monte, the historical novelist must fulfill three duties. First, he[16] must be a *poet*, which means that he must employ compelling plots, characters, and language. Second, he must be a *philosopher*, which means that he must perceive how age, sex, occupation, social position, kinship, and other qualities would lead characters to respond differently to similar historical stimuli. Presaging Lukács's argument that Scott historicizes the psychology of his characters, Del Monte writes that the historical novelist must reveal "el origen de las acciones en una causa levísima, imperceptible a los ojos vulgares" (the motives behind even the slightest actions, imperceptive to common eyes; 144). The "common eyes" Del Monte refers to belong not only to readers who may be unfamiliar with the events being described, but also to historians who have accounted for events without penetrating the minds of the people involved in them. Distinguishing historical novels from "historias vulgares" (common histories), Del Monte explains that the historical novelist's third duty is to be an *antiquarian* who looks beyond conventional written documents for insight into how his characters lived and thought (146). It is easy to imagine Del Monte passing variations on these three recommendations on to the writers who attended his salons and who would go on to author stories about the first encounters between Europeans and the native groups that once inhabited the island, the construction of local buildings, and of course the woes of the saccharocracy and slavery.

[16] As far as I can tell, the writers Del Monte mentored in Havana were all male.

All three of the responsibilities that Del Monte places upon the shoulders of the historical novelist offered the creoles writing under his supervision opportunities for subversion. However, given the tight control the Spanish Empire exercised over the collection of colonial documents and the composition of imperial histories, what is most subversive about Del Monte's essay is that it suggests that historical novelists operating independently from the Spanish state could produce accounts of past events that were even more accurate than the ones that were being produced by the court's historians, and that they could base their accounts on sources that were not collected in the empire's archives. According to Lukács, Scott's historical novels emerged in the years following the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, when bourgeois groups throughout Europe were asserting their control over the interpretation of history[17]. The idea that the recording of history could be democratized remained fairly controversial in Spain, where Ferdinand VII (who had been unseated by Napoleon) resisted offering middle-class citizens the concessions that other European courts were making in their efforts to prevent suffering Louis XIV's fate. The idea that the recording of history could also be decolonized and undertaken by a small group of Cubans living far away from the court (Del Monte's target audience) was downright revolutionary.

The Del Monte texts' efforts at decolonizing Cuban history are most evident in their use of source materials. While discussing the historical novelist's role as an

[17] In Lukács's view, bourgeois historians (and historical novelists) were primarily interested in defending their rise to power as the natural result of past events. This was important as a defense against conservatives who criticized revolutionaries for disrupting history and the institutions that held society together.

antiquarian, Del Monte suggests studying unwritten artifacts that could not easily be stored at a library. For one example, he shares the apocryphal story that Scott could only compose historical fiction while seated in a chair that had been constructed during the period that he was describing. For another, he insists that before the historical novelist may "respirar la atmósfera de los tiempos pasados" (breathe the atmosphere of bygone times), he must "revuelva guardarropas, visite museos de antiguallas, consulte cuadros y pinturas, y examine y compare ruinas de toda especie" (dig through wardrobes, visit collections of antiques, consult portraits and paintings, and examine and compare ruins of every kind; 146). As I have mentioned, the narratives authored by the Del Monte group address a number of moments in Cuban history, ranging from the first encounter between the European explorers and the indigenous groups inhabiting the island in the fifteenth century to the establishment of the saccharocracy and the expansion of slavery in the late eighteenth century. Heeding Del Monte's advice to "examine and compare ruins of every kind," these texts tend to feature lengthy allegorical descriptions of Cuban landmarks. For example, Villaverde's story "La cueva de Taganana" (The cave of Taganana; 1839), explains how a promontory in the Havana area gained its name, and José Antonio Echevarría's novella *Antonelli* (1838) discusses the construction of the Morro fortress. Similarly, Suárez's *Francisco* is set in the nightmarish shadow of the sugar mill, which the author was able to discuss in vivid detail because his family owned one (Castañeda 15). Lush pictures of the landscape are a hallmark of romantic fiction, but in early Cuban literary narratives they are more than mere embellishments or throwbacks to convention.

Probably visited by the authors who included them in their stories, the landmarks I just cited conceal perspectives that were not included in any official rendition of imperial history and offer proof that writing a thorough history of the island required living there.

Of course, as members of the budding literati, the authors who attended Del Monte's salons believed in the value of the written word and integrated details that they located in print sources into their historical narratives. One source that has drawn considerable attention from recent scholars is the Manzano autobiography, which was completed around 1835 and introduces character archetypes (the idealistic young slave, the brutal slave driver) and events (being exiled from the city to the sugar mill) that would reappear over and over again in the stories that the Del Monte writers began circulating a few years later. However, the authors who depicted scenes of colonial violence in Cuba preceding the expansion of the saccharocracy in the 1790s also drew from other sources, including official documents and histories by Spanish writers. Unfortunately (for my purposes), these writers tended to simply assure their readers that they have consulted these kinds of sources rather than record the names of the sources themselves—but there are exceptions. For example, Ramón de Palma y Romay finishes his story "Matanzas y Yumurí" (Matanzas and Yumurí; 1837) with a reference to Bartolomé de las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* (History of the Indies; 1561)[18]. The *Historia* draws on the friar's participation in some early Spanish expeditions to the

[18] The reference to Las Casas's *Historia* confirms Palma's—and by extension the Del Monte circle's—commitment to recovering a history of Cuba that was not documented in the canonical texts. As Ross reports, the *Historia* circulated only as a manuscript passed between until historians until 1875, when it was officially published for the first time (114).

Americas and describes his disbelief at finding a handful of white Spaniards integrated into an indigenous community in an area of Cuba that he did not believe Spain had yet penetrated. Engaging in the process of "archival refashioning," which I mentioned in the Introduction, Palma completes and moreover challenges Las Casas's account of the Cuban Conquest. The backstory that he offers suggests that Europeans are indebted to native Americans for their survival and that Caribbean history is driven not by external forces (Spain's will to conquer and exploit), but by the values, feuds, and desires of the people who live there. Like attending to local landmarks, identifying and filling in the holes in the empire's official history of itself offered writers like Palma one effective method for expressing their resistant creole subjectivity and refuting the belief that peninsular Spanish historiography could account for the stories and experiences of all the inhabitants and areas encompassed by the Spanish Empire.

Considering the diversity of texts produced by the Del Monte writers, it seems difficult to me to defend the common claim that documenting the ills of slavery was the Del Monte group's primary strategy for denouncing the hegemony of the sugar trade and the tyranny of the Spanish government. One might argue that the anti-slavery texts depart from Del Monte's personal support for historical novels since slavery was still a matter of imperial policy in the 1830s. However, even the texts that are set on sugar mills exemplify the influence of Scott, Hugo, and others. Consider the following two examples: First, as I have said, the anti-slavery texts were based on documentation (Manzano's narrative) and the author's experience visiting a sugar mill, in the case of

Francisco. As Lukács explains, this attention to historical detail and interest in research does not characterize works of narrative fiction until the emergence of Scott's historical novels in the nineteenth century. Second, the anti-slavery novels focus decidedly on past events and historical processes. Tanco's "Petrona y Rosalía" depicts a cycle of abuse that is inflicted first upon a slave woman (Petrona) and then upon her daughter (Rosalía) a generation later, and Suárez's *Francisco* specifies on its title page that it recounts "escenas [que] pasan antes de 1838" (scenes that take place before 1838). In fact, the anti-slavery stories form an integral but ultimately limited subsection of the Del Monte salon's broad literary production. Because they addressed events even further back in the colonial past, the other works of historical fiction that these authors completed were less obviously inflammatory and thus were able to be printed in periodicals like *El Plantel* and *El Álbum* that traveled as far as peninsular Spain and the United States. As a result, these texts probably played an even larger role in building sympathy for the creole cause. In contrast, the anti-slavery narratives circulated informally in readings at Del Monte's house and as manuscripts passed between acquaintances. Together, these texts document the group's strategy to overturn the saccharocracy's domination over Cuban society through collaborative literary intellectualism. The fact that anti-slavery texts like Tanco's "Petrona y Rosalía," Suárez's *Francisco*, and the narrative by Manzano are far better known than Palma's "Matanzas y Yumurí," Villaverde's "La cueva de Taganaga," and Echevarría's *Antonelli* is a result of the narrow view that scholars have taken on this crucial era in Cuban literary history.

In 1844, the colonial government brought the activities of the Del Monte circle to a sudden halt with a display of authoritarian violence that made the exile of Saco ten years earlier seem like an act of benevolence. That year, feeling increased pressure to crack down on the dissenting voices in Cuba lest the growing discontent among its slaves and free people of color lead to a large-scale rebellion, officials manufactured what historians call the Conspiración de La Escalera (Ladder Conspiracy). In *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (1988), Robert Paquette writes that the officials who were tasked with protecting the interests of landowners and ensuring that the manufacture of sugar continued were growing alarmed by acts of resistance being mounted by black slaves. Among other things, these officials worried that slaves on different plantations were coordinating their efforts, and that they were being goaded into rebelling against their masters by the representatives of foreign governments (chiefly England), escaped slaves (maroons), and members of the island's growing community of free people of color. When slaves on several plantations in the Matanzas province rebelled in November, 1843, in what looked at first like a coordinated attempt at a revolution, the Cuban Captain-General Leopoldo O'Donnell took advantage of the opportunity the event provided him to put an end to the resistance that the saccharocracy was facing from various sectors. Over the course of several months, landowners and the colonial agents under O'Donnell's command arrested, interrogated, and tortured thousands of Cubans in their effort to discover the leaders of the supposed conspiracy. The Del Monte writers did

not support the idea of a slave-led revolution[19], but they did share connections with the other two groups. For years, Del Monte had been in correspondence with the British consul David Turnbull, who was an outspoken opponent of the slave trade, and he had forwarded a portfolio of documents including Manzano's narrative and *Francisco* to the Irish abolitionist Richard Robert Madden with the apparent hope that they would help the British Empire place pressure on Spain to discontinue the slave trade[20]. In Havana, the writers Del Monte mentored lived alongside many free people of color (who clustered in the island's urban centers), and the well-known mulatto poet Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (also known as Plácido) made occasional appearances at Del Monte's salons. As Paquette reports, the violence of the Ladder Conspiracy fell the hardest on the island's free people of color because they were neither white nor the property of whites. In the end, a number of Cubans were put to death, including Plácido, and a handful of white intellectuals were sent into exile, including Del Monte. After 1844, some of the creoles that had attended Del Monte's salons continued to write, but they no longer wrote in close collaboration with one another, and with the exception of Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*, which did not appear until 1882, they did not write works of historical fiction.

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[19] In fact, one of their goals was to prevent this from happening. As Paquette writes, "their particularist vision of *Cubanidad* would have emptied Cuba of its blacks, not only its slaves. . . . Their passion to end the slave trade was the necessary first step in the whitening of Cuba…" (101).

[20] Paquette depicts the Del Monte circle's association with abolitionists including Turnbull, Madden, and the U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Hill Everett as uneasy. As he writes, "no Cuban-born white, or at least no Cuban-born white of standing, held anything near to the uncompromising, immediatist abolitionism of a David Turnbull or a William Lloyd Garrison. The liberationist ideology that emanated from the dual revolution, the British Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution, had penetrated but after refraction in the Cuban air" (96). In other words, although Del Monte (in particular) allied himself with these men, he did not share their exact beliefs or approve of their methods. He supported a gradual end to Cuban slavery that would leave control over the island firmly in the hands of white islanders.

Avellaneda spent her first nineteen years in the Cuban interior, in the city of Puerto Príncipe. Boasting a population of roughly 30,000 inhabitants, 12,000 of whom were slaves or free people of color, the city was one of the Caribbean's most important urban centers, and for most of the author's childhood years it was the seat of the Real Audiencia (Royal Audience) of Santo Domingo, which made it the legal, if not quite the cultural, capital of a Spanish imperial district encompassing Cuba, Florida, and Louisiana (Harter 19-20). The city did not rival Havana as a center of wealth or hub of intellectual activity. Nonetheless, the young Avellaneda found outlets for her literary talents. For a time in the early 1820s, she took classes from the nationalist poet José María Heredia, who would be banished from the island for supporting independence in 1823 (Cotarelo 13). Moreover, Avellaneda's parents indulged her love of reading by importing works of history, fiction, and drama from Europe, and she and a few female friends pored over these texts in salons that she hosted in her home (Gómez de Avellaneda, *Diario* 17). As an adult, Avellaneda would report that she composed original works during her youth in Cuba as well, including poems imitating the style of Francisco de Quevedo, the story "El gigante de las cien cabezas" (The hundred-headed giant), and a play based on the life of Hernán Cortés (Harter 21; Álzaga 82). It also possible, as her friend José Ramón Betancourt said, that she began work on her first printed novel, the anti-slavery romance *Sab*, during these early years though it would not appear in print until 1841 (Álzaga 96).

Despite Avellaneda's contemporaneity with the young Havanan writers, the fact that she did not write under Del Monte's supervision and did not circulate her novels in

Cuba makes her place in this founding generation of Cuban literary narrative difficult to assess[21]. After Del Monte was exiled to Spain, he must have read in metropolitan newspapers about the creole woman whose plays and poems were making her a belle of the Spanish court, but sadly it is impossible to prove from the letters that the two authors left behind that they ever came into direct contact or ever realized that they shared certain political affinities with one another. Nonetheless, Avellaneda corresponded regularly with friends in Cuba who forwarded her some of the island's publications, and if the packages she received from them included copies of *El Plantel*, *El Álbum*, or another of the journals that the Del Monte writers had edited, then she might have read works like "Matanzas y Yumurí" or *Antonelli*. She might even have been familiar with Palma's essay "La novela" (1838), which repeats Del Monte's praise for historical novels as superior alternatives to "las crónicas y los anales de los historiadores" (the chronicles and annals of the historians; 181), and asks specifically why more authors have not written novels about the history of Cuba. Whatever today's scholars make of Avellaneda's long residency in Spain and the fact that *Sab* is her only novel with a Cuban setting, they do agree that it was because Avellaneda wrote from the relative safety of the metropole that she was able to realize an unencumbered literary career and bear the torch of Cuban literary narrative for the next half century virtually on her own. If she had tried to

[21] For well into the twentieth century, Cubans debated whether or not to celebrate her as a national writer, and in 1953 a proposal to name the theater in Camagüey after Avellaneda proved so controversial that the poet Dulce María Loynaz held a conference defending her predecessor as "una cubana universal" (a universal Cuban; 21). For Loynaz, the surest proof of Avellaneda's love for the island of her birth was that she continued referring to herself as a Cuban even after living for years in Europe, where being known as a Cuban creole would not have brought her any advantages (34).

circulate texts like *Sab* or *Guatimozín* while still living on the island, where creole intellectualism was tightly controlled, she would have suffered the same fate as Heredia, Saco, and the Del Monte writers. For daring to challenge the primacy of Spain and the Cuban saccharocracy, she would have been exiled or, worse, frightened into silence.

Changing Regimes: The Coronation of Queen Isabel II

Avellaneda supported her stepfather Isidoro de Escalada's decision to move the family to his home in La Coruña, Spain, in the spring of 1836. As Hugh Harter writes, she expected that relocating to Europe would give her easier access to new publications by vanguard authors and a chance to attain a formal education (23). But to her dismay, the Galician coast offered even fewer opportunities for cultural enrichment than Puerto Príncipe had, and Escalada's family ridiculed her interest in letters (24). She eventually left La Coruña in 1838 in the company of her brother, Manuel, and the two Cubans spent the next several months journeying between Spanish cities. By 1839, they had taken up residence in Seville, and Gertrudis had charmed her way into the city's exclusive literary circles. In Seville, she began publishing poems in local journals under the pen name "La Peregrina" (The Wanderer) and giving readings of the first ten chapters of *Sab* (Harter 126). When an uncle on their father's side died in 1840, Gertrudis and Manuel received an inheritance that brought them financial independence from their mother and stepfather. Emboldened by the positive response to her poems and her growing popularity in Seville, Avellaneda used the money to move once again, this time to Madrid, at that time the epicenter of Spanish literature and society (Simón Palmer 220).

At the time of Avellaneda's arrival, the Spanish capital was in the thick of a long and violent process of social and political transformation. Since the late fifteenth century, the empire had been ruled by kings and queens who enforced absolutist and sometimes quite brutal policies in defense of the Catholic faith and the royal family's right of succession. Education, the printing press, and other potentially enlightening technologies were tightly controlled during the Inquisition's long tenure, and as Kathleen Ross writes, "the threat of violence cast a pall over intellectual activity that was constant and ominous" (106). As Protestantism and ideas associated with the Enlightenment gained hold in other places, the Spanish court clung tightly to Catholicism, tightened its borders, and acquired a reputation among its neighbors for being despotic and superstitious. These conditions changed briefly in 1808, when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded the Iberian peninsula and dethroned King Ferdinand VII. With Ferdinand imprisoned, the Spanish parliament drafted a liberal constitution that curtailed the king's powers, turned the colonies into provinces, and granted suffrage to all Spanish males. Ferdinand dismissed the constitution upon his reinstatement in 1813 and spent his remaining years persecuting the legislators who had authored it it. Thus, although the so-called 1812 Constitution was not formally adopted, it became a powerful rallying cry for Spanish liberals, and it confirmed the widening influence of progressive thought in an otherwise reactionary empire. As the historian Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón has written, the Constitution marked "el origen de la modernización de España" (the origin of Spanish modernization; 22).

Ferdinand died in 1833, leaving his three-year-old daughter, Isabel, as his heir. Even before his death, the matter of Isabel's ascension had split the Spanish court into factions, with opponents including Ferdinand's brother Carlos declaring that they would not recognize a female sovereign. As Pérez writes, Isabel's birth "se convirtió no sólo en disputa familiar por las aspiraciones al trono, sino en espoleta para la trabazón de unas alianzas políticas que desembocaron en guerra civil" (became not only a family dispute over royal ascension, but also a fuse that exploded fragile political alliances and led to civil war; 22). To retain her power over the government, Isabel's mother, María Cristina, formed alliances with Spanish liberal progressives, who in turn defended Isabel's right to the throne in a prolonged war against Carlos. For several years, María Cristina ruled the empire in her capacity as regent, but in 1840, facing increasing pressure to enact progressive reforms she found distasteful, she relinquished the position to the powerful General Baldomero Espartero and fled to Paris. Unfortunately, Espartero could not unify the fractured court, and in 1843 he was deposed by the progressive Generals Ramón Narváez and Francisco Serrano. At the insistence of these military leaders, Isabel claimed her title as the queen of Spain. She was thirteen years old.

Avellaneda's biographers depict the author as a belle of the Spanish court during the first years of Isabel's reign. As she had hoped, the poems and plays that she published in the early 1840s were received favorably by Madrid society, and she enhanced her popularity by giving electrifying public readings of these works. It was inevitable that the newly coronated queen and the creole woman capturing the fancy of the capital city's

social and literary circles would become acquainted with one another. By most accounts, their first meeting occurred in November, 1843, when the Liceo de Madrid (Lyceum of Madrid) held a poetry reading in honor of Isabel's coronation (Álzaga 101). Avellaneda prepared a poem for the occasion that assured the queen (who was also in attendance) that the inhabitants of the American colonies would welcome the news of her ascension.

> …allá en el Occidente
> La perla de los mares mejicanos,
> Al escuchar nuestro aplauso el grito
> Entre el hervor de sus inquietas olas,
> En las alas del viento
> Con eco fiel devolverá el acento
> Que atruena ya las playas españolas!
>
> …there in the West
> The pearl of the Mexican seas,
> Upon hearing our applause the cry
> Amid the tumult of the restless waves,
> On the wings of the wind
> With loyal echo shall return the noise
> That already quakes the shores of Spain!
> (qtd. in Álzaga; 102)

At the end of the reading, Isabel offered Avellaneda her hand to kiss, and so began what Harter, among others, describes as a friendship between the two women. In the following years, Avellaneda's fame as a poet continued to grow, and the queen's retinue frequently attended her plays (Harter 17). She wrote additional poems for royal occasions, including one recognizing María Cristina's return to Madrid after several years exiled in France (31). Like the other members of Spain's lettered and liberal classes, Avellaneda was hopeful that Isabel's reign would inaugurate a brighter and more equitable era in Spanish

history. It is not difficult to imagine that she would leverage her celebrity and friendship with the queen to build the latter's sympathy for the plight of creole intellectuals.

One sign of Avellaneda's willingness to exert her influence over court politics around the time of Isabel's ascension is her participation in the journal *El Laberinto* (The Labyrinth), which ran from November 1, 1843, to October 20, 1845, and listed the Cuban author as one of its founding "colaboradores" (collaborators). The journal serialized her first historical novel, *Espatolino*, beginning on January 1, 1844, and possibly also included words she had written in the summaries of recent events that it printed without attributing specific authors. In the preface to the journal's first issue, editor Antonio Flores expresses the same contempt for Spain's tendency to import literature from abroad that Del Monte had voiced in his essay on the historical novel. Though *El Laberinto* would inform its readers about events taking place outside of the empire's borders and even review the careers of foreign writers like William Shakespeare and Daniel Defoe, Flores promises that between its covers readers would not find a single "linea traducida" (translated line). This preface establishes a didactic tone that echoes in many of the journal's contents. On the one hand, Flores and his collaborators defended the merits of Spanish letters by revisiting classic texts like *Don Quixote* (1615), profiling contemporary authors like the playwright Tomás Rodríguez Rubí, and publishing original works like *Espatolino*. On the other hand, they also desired to shape their readers' perception of the new, progressive regime as a step forward after the tyranny of Ferdinand VII and the war and tumult under María Cristina and Espartero. In the

"Bosquejo histórico" (historical sketch) printed in the December 1, 1843, issue, Antonio Ferrer de Río offers a summary of Isabel's childhood that tacks back and forth between events in the princess's private life and the violence of the Carlist Wars. Referencing the negative influences that persist and could corrupt the reign of the adolescent queen, Ferrer de Río concludes the sketch with a warning: "No debe olvidarse que el despotismo es hijo legítimo de la anarquia" (One must not forget that despotism is the legitimate child of anarchy; 40). Pointed words such as these aimed not only at the journal's bourgeois consumers, but at the queen herself.

Frequently, *El Laberinto* cast an eye across the Atlantic to Spain's Caribbean colonies. For example, the fourth issue contains the travelogue "Viaje marítimo de Cádiz a la Habana" (Sea voyage from Cadiz to Havana), while the fifth issue, which debuted Avellaneda's *Espatolino*, opens with a paean to the conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa under the heading "Personas ilustres de la conquista de América" (Illustrious figures of the conquest of America). Additionally, Cuba and Puerto Rico often figured into the "Revista de la Quincena" (Review of the last five weeks) column that appeared on the final pages of every issue. Several of these pieces were written by Ferrer de Río who, as it turns out, spent his childhood in Cuba, where the Inquisition's violence arguably was felt the hardest, before he returned to the metropole as a young man. The involvement of Ferrer de Río and Avellaneda as well as the journal's continual attention to the Americas suggests that *El Laberinto* was more inclusive of—and thus more sympathetic to—the creole perspective than were contemporary publications like *El Globo* (The Globe). As

the praise for conquerors like Balboa attests, however, creoles and Spanish progressives did not always see a contradiction in celebrating Spain's role in the subjugation of New World indigenous groups and calling for Spain to modernize its methods for governing those colonized areas. Though Avellaneda, in particular, is credited for defending the subjectivity of Cuban creoles in works like *Sab* and *Guatimozín*, she was, as Sommer acknowledges in *Foundational Fictions*, "just as much a Spanish Liberal as she was a creole abolitionist" (133). She shared Del Monte's frustration with colonial practices (like slavery) that advanced the interests of the island's elite landowners and left creole children wanting means for an adequate education. However, in contrast to Del Monte, she did not see pursuing an alliance with politicians in Great Britain and the United States—Spain's two strongest rivals for domination over the Caribbean region—as an acceptable solution to Cuba's problems[22]. At times almost nativist in her defense of the Spanish court, Avellaneda clearly evidences the "double consciousness" that scholars of coloniality say characterize the inhabitants of colonized spaces.

One point where *El Laberinto*'s interests in the young queen and Cuba converge is its writers' denunciations of the torture and other forms of brutality that Ferdinand VII inflicted at home and that representatives of Isabel's court continued to inflict upon her subjects abroad. Ferrer de Río's indictment of Spanish despotism in the sketch of Isabel's childhood is one example. Another example is the journal's coverage of the execution of the Cuban poet Plácido as one of the ringleaders in the so-called Ladder Conspiracy of

[22] In *Sab*, England and the United States are both critiqued in the character of Otway, Carlota's husband, who is the son of an English entrepreneur and was raised in the United States.

1843. Juan Perez Calvo reported the execution in the August 16, 1844, issue, lamenting that the colony had been so inhospitable to the mulatto poet that he had given into the "envilecimiento que la humanidad imprime sobre el color de su rostro" (depravity that humanity imprints on the color of his face; 278). Perez Calvo excuses Plácido's involvement in the suspected plot to overthrow colonial rule as a misguided act of patriotism and certainly not worthy of death:

> Lo que es cierto que si á Plácido le condenó la justicia, pudo salvarle la clemencia; que á ser nosotros jueces con una mano hubiéramos firmado la sentencia de muerte, y con la otra hubiéramos descorrido el cerrojo de su prisión. No abundan talentos de su temple en el mundo para segarlos en flor en vez de prodigarlos esmerado cultivo, ni estamos tan abundantes de luces que fuéramos á apagar la estrella refulgente que brillaba en el ocaso.
>
> (What is certain is that although justice condemned Plácido, mercy could have saved him; if we were his judge, with one hand we would have signed his death sentence, and with the other we would have unbolted his prison door. Talents like his are not so abundant that we may cut them down in bloom instead of cultivating them, nor are we surrounded in so many lights that we may put out the refulgent star lighting up the night sky; 278).

Paquette and other scholars of the Escalera Conspiracy have proven that the colonial government tortured and executed far more free people of color than creoles or black slaves. However, as these words indicate, progressive intellectuals believed that *they* were more often than not the primary victims of violent, authoritarian regimes.

Avellaneda reached what may have been the apex of her celebrity in literary Madrid around the same time that Perez Calvo was grappling with Plácido's execution and *El Laberinto* was serializing her *Espatolino*, which criticizes the use of torture to extract information from prisoners. A few months later, in 1845, Isabel unexpectedly

pardoned several officers who had been implicated in a conspiracy against her. Optimistic that their hopes for a compassionate court that accepted outside criticism were finally being realized, the city's literati decided to honor the queen's acts of clemency with a poetry competition moderated by the Liceo de Madrid. Avellaneda entered two poems in the competition—one under her own name, one under the name of her half-brother, Felipe de Escalada—and walked away with both first and second prize (Harter 33). The author's success at the poetry competition, which culminated in one of the queen's uncles placing a crown of laurel on the Cuban writer's brow, reveals not only her consistent engagement with the topics of torture and punishment in the mid 1840s. It also suggests one of the reasons that she would have felt emboldened to exert an even stronger influence over Isabelline politics in her capacity as one of the court's favored authors.

Offering further evidence of Avellaneda's influence in the court, María del Carmen Simón Palmer has revealed that the author enjoyed a close friendship with one of Isabel's strongest generals, Ramón Narváez, and that the Cuban author assisted in Narváez's (failed) campaign to convince the queen to marry her maternal uncle, Francisco de Paula de Borbón-Dos Sicilias, the Count of Trapani, in 1845 (221). Today, historians recognize that Isabel kept hold of the Spanish throne for a quarter century only because she had the support of powerful men like Narváez who kept her opponents at bay. However, the fact that Narváez and Avellaneda attempted to ingratiate the queen to an older, more experienced husband despite her extreme youth and her protestations indicates their lack of faith in her judgment and capacity to rule. According to Pérez,

> Isabel II no había recibido la educación apropiada para ejercer el poder… En un Estado constitucional la corona tenía que dirigir un poder ejecutivo organizado desde la representación de los partidos y desde el concepto de la ciudadanía. Ni le era útil saber coser y bordar, ni tampoco su formación religiosa, reducida en gran parte a contenidos supersticiosos. Se comportó como una persona caprichosa, conocedora del poder que acumulaba en sus manos, pero sin aprender en ningún momento las responsabilidades que conllevaba semejante poder. Al contrario, no entendía que, como reina, no pudiera mandar en el mundo de la política del modo como lo hacía con la servidumbre del palacio, porque tenía una educación de jerarquia absolutista en la que no cabía oponerse a la voluntad real. Sin embargo, la sociedad española ya no era del antiguo régimen. Estaba en marcha ese zigzagueante proceso de modernización cuyos primeros pasos no sólo suponían, por ejemplo, la expansión de las formas capitalistas en la economía, sino también transformaciones revolucionarias producidas por el despliegue del concepto de ciudadanía que proclamó a todas las personas libres e iguales. En definitiva, estaban en proceso de cambio las relaciones políticas, las formas de poder, las expresiones culturales y las lindes de las identidades individuales y colectivas.
>
> (Isabel II did not receive an education that prepared her to exercise power… In a constitutional state the Crown exerted executive powers that were determined by party representatives and the concept of citizenship. Knowing how to sew and embroider was useless, as was her religious education, which consisted primarily of superstitions. She behaved like a capricious person, cognizant of the power she held in her hands but without ever learning the responsibilities that accompanied that power. To the contrary, she did not grasp that as queen one could not command the world of politics the way one commanded palace servants because her education in absolutist hierarchies [had led her to believe] that the royal will would not be opposed. However, Spanish society had changed since the old regime. The zig-zag process of modernization was already in motion, and its first steps not only required, for example, the expansion of capitalist economic structures, but also revolutionary transformations produced by the advancement of the concept of citizenship, which proclaimed all people free and equal. Without a doubt, the power structures, cultural expressions, and the borders between individual and collective identities were all in the process of change. My translation; 26)

That the education Isabel received did not ready her for the demands of national leadership could hardly have surprised Avellaneda. The ire her own intellectualism had

incited among her stepfather's family in La Coruña had made it abundantly clear to the young Cuban that Spanish society did not expect its young women to be educated in history and philosophy, and it is possible that she saw in the queen twenty years her junior a specter of the misguided woman that she might have become had she not aggressively pursued an education on her own.

Stepping into the role of tutor that Heredia had played for her in Puerto Príncipe as well as the role of *Cronista mayor* that Herrera and Solís had played for courts under previous regimes, Avellaneda thus took to the metropolitan libraries and surrounded herself with as many volumes of Conquest historiography as she could find. *Guatimozín* is the didactic text that emerged from this period of research and distillation. If the book reads differently than, say, the history by Solís, it is because she composed her account of the Mexican Conquest from within the artistic vanguard of the nineteenth (as opposed to the seventeenth) century, when the novels of Scott and his imitators were in heavy circulation. Scott's innovations were creeping into intellectual pursuits in addition to fiction, and historiography, in particular, was undergoing a shift toward organizing history as a narrative with protagonists and imagined dialogue. Author Sheila Heti, in a novel about the life of Prescott, helpfully describes the new approach as "giving history an interest" (88). A textbook for an unpracticed monarch, *Guatimozín* offers lessons in just leadership and Spanish colonial history. It places the tyranny of Cortés in contrast to the morality of Guatimozín, and leverages the romantic features of the historical novel to

encourage the queen to govern the Spanish Empire with mercy and empathy, and to abandon the tenets of absolutism that had been drilled into her as a child.

Guatimozín: Last of the Aztecs, First of the Creoles

One of Avellaneda's greatest innovations in the field of Conquest historiography is her attention to the education and leadership of Cuauhtémoc, who, as I have said, does not make an appearance in the author's source texts until after he ascends the throne in the Conquest's second year. If, on the one hand, she uses the canon's lack of interest in this historical figure to depict the whole of Spanish historiography as incomplete and Eurocentric, on the other, she takes advantage of the gap in the official narrative to develop a character that serves as an avatar for mid nineteenth-century Spanish creoles. As I shall explain, Avellaneda's Guatimozin also becomes a positive model for ruling over a large empire in an era of internal discord and geopolitical uncertainty. If the queen is a careful reader, the author seems to be arguing, then she will learn how to avoid leading the Spanish Empire to the same destruction at the hands of rivals like England and the United States that the Aztec Empire suffered at the hands of a duplicitous conquistador, Hernán Cortés, and his legion of Spanish and indigenous followers[23].

The text begins, somewhat unexpectedly, with a paragraph placing the Conquest of Mexico in the context of the regime changes taking place during the same historical moment in continental Europe:

[23] She may have felt authorized to steer the queen's thinking on these matters on account of the latter's youth, their friendship, and her own status as one of Madrid's most celebrated writers.

> La muerte de Maximiliano I colocaba en la frente de Carlos V la corona imperial de Alemania, y mientras el nuevo César recibía el cetro en Aquisgrán, y la España, presa de la codicia y arbitrariedad de algunos flamencos, ardía en intestinas disensiones, el genio osado y sagaz de Hernán Cortés, ensanchando los límites de los ya vastos dominios de aquel monarca, lanzábase a sujetar a su trono el inmenso continente de las Indias Occidentales.
>
> (The death of Maximilian I had placed on the head of Carlos V the imperial crown of Germany, and while the new Caesar was receiving the scepter in Aix-la-Chapelle, and Spain, prey to the greed and arrogance of the Flemings, was burning with internal dissentions, the daring and sagacious genius of Hernán Cortés, enlarging the already vast dominions of His Majesty, set out to subjugate to the imperial throne the immense continent of the West Indies; 43/my translation.)

Carlos V's ascension to the position of Holy Roman Emperor in 1519 may seem an odd opening for a Conquest novel, especially considering how little attention is paid throughout this particular novel to events taking place outside of the American mainland. However, as Lukács and other scholars of historical fiction have argued, the genre excels at revealing past echoes in present moments. Given the wars that her mother, María Cristina, had fought to ensure Isabel's right to the throne, not to mention the 1843 coup that had deposed Espartero and declared her queen several years before she expected to occupy the position, Isabel must have understood that she lived in an era of significant political turbulence. By beginning with the story of another monarch—one of Isabel's predecessors, no less—who also had to grapple with unifying a splintering empire, Avellaneda suggests that the troubles the queen was witnessing in the nineteenth century were the pangs of a political wound that had been festering since the sixteenth century.

By following the suggestion with her account of the Conquest, she indicates that Spanish colonialism in the Americas is one source of those pangs.

Though Avellaneda shares many of the same preoccupations as the Del Monte authors, the novel *Guatimozín* differs in one obvious way from "Matanzas y Yumurí," *Francisco*, and the other texts that I have discussed from this group: It is not set within the geographical boundaries of Cuba. In fact, one might go so far as to argue that Avellaneda strategically erases Cuba from her account of the Conquest, as she introduces Cortés after his arrival to the North American mainland and does not dramatize any scenes of his mutinous actions during his long residence in Cuba from 1511 to 1518. When the island's name appears in the text, it is usually in reference to Cortés's nemesis Diego Velázquez de Cuellar, the Governor of Cuba, who attempted to bring the errant conquistador back in chains. The erasure of Cuba seems inconsistent with the author's desire to rewrite colonial history from her creole perspective only until one remembers the violent persecution that the Del Monte authors faced around the time that she was completing *Guatimozín*'s first two books. Funneling her criticism of colonial policies into a story about a colony (New Spain) that had already broken free of the empire enabled Avellaneda to criticize Spanish imperialism without risking being persecuted as a radical Cuban separatist. She could brush off such an accusation by pointing out that she had written a novel about Mexico, not Cuba, and that it was a trifling work intended for women and children. In these respects, the novel fulfills the requirements of a *palimpsest*, a term that Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar apply to texts by English and US

American women writers in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Borrowing these scholars' words, the novel is a work "whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning." Furthermore, it achieves "true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal"—in Avellaneda's case *colonial*—"literary standards" (73). Revising Gilbert and Gubar's feminist vocabulary, Ianes calls *Guatimozín* "un texto descentrado" (a decentered text) because it is flooded with signs that may be interpreted in multiple ways and asks the reader to serve as a "decodificador" (decoder; 122). Whichever framework one applies, the point is that the author shields herself from persecution by displacing her critique of Spain's colonial policies in *Cuba* onto the terrain of sixteenth-century *Mexico*.

In contrast to canonical texts like Díaz's *Verdadera historia*, Avellaneda's book introduces the figure of Guatimozín in its first pages. He appears in Book 1, Chapter 2, as his predecessor on the throne[24], the Emperor Moctezuma II, awaits Cortés's arrival to the Aztec capital. Guatimozín is one of three trusted advisors the emperor has assembled to discuss the rumors that these foreigners arriving from the distant east are the descendants of Quetzalcoatl. Aware that readers including the superficially educated Isabel have been conditioned to consider native people "low" creatures that are not quite human, the author offers a description of the young man's body that highlights certain features nineteenth-century phrenologists associated with white, "developed" people.

[24] Moctezuma is Guatimozín's father-in-law. The historical Cuauhtémoc was also married to Moctezuma's daughter, but not until after Moctezuma was killed and Cuauhtémoc became emperor himself.

> Era el otro de los tres un joven aún no salido de la adolescencia, cuya tez perfectamente blanca y los ojos de un pardo claro, le hacían parecer extraño entre sus compatriotas….[A]unque alto y bien proporcionado, no tenía apariencia alguna de robustez. Su hermosa cabeza—prolongada en la región superior—estaba cubierta de finos y sedosos cabellos, que sombreaban agradablemente una frente alta, cuadrada, pálida y anchurosa, que parecía, sin embargo, oscurecida por una nube de melancolía.
>
> (The remaining one of the three was a youth still of adolescent age whose perfectly white complexion and light brown eyes made him appear like a foreigner among his countrymen….Although tall and well proportioned he did not have a robust appearance. His handsome head—prolonged in the upper region—was covered with fine, silky hair which pleasingly shaded a tall, square, pale, and deep forehead, but which however seemed to be overcast with a cloud of melancholy; 52/my translation)

Giving Guatimozín fair skin, smooth hair and an "evolved" skull differentiates him from the other characters who are present in the scene, but it also distinguishes him from the actual indigenous people who inhabited Mesoamerica in the early sixteenth century and whose descendants remained a large presence in Mexico in the nineteenth century. Of course, Spanish American reformers in the independence era often positioned themselves as the spiritual (rater than the biological) heirs to the indigenous civilizations that Europe had subjugated in previous centuries. Without expressing any interest in incorporating the descendants of these civilizations into the predominantly white body politic, these reformers appropriated indigenous iconography to serve as signs and allegories for their own liberal causes. Though Earle has other writers in mind, her words shed light on Avellaneda's relation to the native people that appear in her two American novels. In *Sab*, the one indigenous character is an old woman who dies, leaving the novel's white, female protagonist in charge of relaying Cuba's indigenous legacy to the island's future

inhabitants, who are also presumably white. Similarly, in *Guatimozín*, the dark-skinned Moctezuma, Quetlahuaca, and Cacama are killed, leaving the novel's whiter, eponymous protagonist to rule the empire. In other words, Guatimozín is not an ancestor to creoles in Mexico, Cuba, or anywhere else, but rather a symbol the author develops to help Isabel grasp the plight of creoles everywhere. More virtuous than other inhabitants of the New World, but treated like pariahs in the Old World, creoles are, according to Avellaneda, "foreigner[s] among [their] countrymen."

The specific creoles that Avellaneda seeks to redeem in *Guatimozin* are intellectuals such as Heredia, Saco, Del Monte, and the young Havanans who wrote under Del Monte's guidance, all of whom faced exile or other forms of persecution for engaging in activities that the corrupt colonial government judged treasonous. Over the course of the novel, she excuses the rebellious actions of colonized Americans in general, using the same arguments that Pérez Calvo uses in *El Laberinto* to defend Plácido's role in the Ladder Conspiracy: First, she distinguishes patriotic resistance from treason and, second, she suggests that if creoles are guilty of moving against the mother country, it is a natural consequence of having to live under the yoke of Spanish imperialism. This is a critique that the author had begun in her previous novel, *Espatolino*, which makes a romantic hero out of a bandit who raided the French forces occupying Italy during the reign of Napoleon. Thus, like Espatolino, Guatimozín leads what Avellaneda constructs as a just rebellion in the defense of his homeland before falling into the custody of colonial officials who torture and put him to death. However, since the second novel casts

the well-known, controversial figure of Cortés as the colonial villain, it becomes clear that the precise target of Avellaneda's critique is the Spanish Empire.

Guatimozín as Anti-Authoritarian Critique

Like *Jicoténcal* and the historical tomes that bourgeois European writers were completing in the years leading up to the French Revolution, *Guatimozín* strongly repudiates tyranny. Books 1 and 2 chronicle the arrival of Cortés to Tenochtitlan, the capture of Moctezuma, and Cortés's expulsion from the city during the *Noche triste*. The first chapter is titled "Cortés y Moctezuma" (Cortés and Moctezuma), and though one expects it to distinguish the two characters from one another, it actually reveals more similarities than differences. One similarity is that both Cortés and Moctezuma stand at the head of absolutist, stratified regimes where power is concentrated in the hands of aristocrats and priests[25]. The plot in this first half of the book is driven by the conflict between Cortés and Moctezuma, who, as the author suggests, share certain authoritarian tendencies, including believing that it is acceptable to exploit the weaker areas in the empire's periphery for slave labor and revenue. Moctezuma understands what it means to declare his vassalage

[25] This, of course, is not a historically accurate depiction of Cortés's standing in the Spanish Empire at the time that he undertook the Conquest of Mexico. As I have said, he invaded Mexico without the proper authority, and he certainly was not recognized by his own people as an emperor the same way that Moctezuma was recognized—even by his enemies—as the Emperor of the Aztecs. Nonetheless, because she is writing a critique of tyranny, Avellaneda finds it useful to obscure the conquistador's backstory and instead characterize him as a Napoleon-like emperor who stands on roughly equal footing as Moctezuma. She lends him the *appearance* of an emperor in the novel by frequently depicting him as the head of a large army of Spaniards, Tlaxcalans, and warriors from other indigenous nations who have agreed to support his march against Tenochtitlan, and by characterizing these opportunistic followers as devoted subjects.

to a foreign king and for Tenochtitlan to become a colony on the margins of a great, greedy empire because he has placed other civilizations in exactly the same position[26].

Consider the author's description of the "sistema feudal" (feudal system) that prevailed in the Aztec Empire under Moctezuma's father:

> Una nobleza numerosa y casi independiente; una clase no menos altiva y poderosa en el sacerdocio; un pueblo esclavizado; y un emperador cargado de los poderes ejecutivos, con la sombra de una autoridad que no residía sino en las dos clases mencionadas, era el aspecto político del Imperio cuando subió al trono aquel monarca [Moctezuma II].
>
> (A numerous, almost independent nobility; another class that was no less proud and powerful in the clergy; an enslaved people; and an emperor charged with executive power who cast the shadow of an authority that really existed in the two afore-mentioned classes—such was the political state of the empire when that monarch [Moctezuma II] ascended the throne; 46/my translation.)

These words refer to circumstances in pre-Cortesian Mexico, but they just as accurately describe the balance of political power in Spain from the onset of the Inquisition in the late fifteenth century through the reign of Isabel's father, Ferdinand VII, in the early nineteenth century. According to Pérez, the church, the aristocracy, and the military eventually eroded so much of the monarch's authority that by the time of Isabel's ascension the throne's power was mostly symbolic. Having witnessed the wars against Carlos, the exile of María Cristina, and the deposition of Espartero, both Avellaneda and the queen must have understood that the latter's reign would last only as long as she

[26] Todorov speculates that the indigenous groups Cortés encountered on his way to Tenochtitlan offered relatively little resistance because they had already been numbed to the conditions of imperialism by their interactions with the Aztecs. As he writes, "Mexico at the time is not a homogeneous state, but a conglomerate of populations, defeated by the Aztecs who occupy the top of the pyramid. So that far from incarnating an absolute evil, Cortés often appears to them as a lesser evil, as a liberator, so to speak, who permits them to throw off the yoke of a tyranny especially detestable because so close at hand" (58).

retained the pivotal support of influential military leaders like Narváez. However, neither woman sensed the true extent to which the monarch's powers had been eroded since this, like most historical processes, is something that is easier to see in hindsight than while it was taking place. In any event, this passage serves as a reminder to Isabel that although she holds the scepter of authority in her hands, there are powerful forces surrounding the court that will take advantage of her inexperience and attempt to control her. Like Ferrer de Río, who wrote on the eve of Isabel's coronation that Spain had not broken entirely free of its Inquisatorial past, Avellaneda warns the young queen that unless she is vigilant she will become an instrument of other people's tyranny.

Both Cortés and Moctezuma, in their efforts to expand their influence, circumvent the laws that their respective empires have put into place to prevent the kinds of despotic acts they commit. Cortés illegally founds a city (Veracruz) on the American mainland, forms a council that elects him the city's leader, and essentially grants himself the authority to conduct the Conquest that Velázquez, the Governor of Cuba, has withheld from him. Moctezuma, desiring the autonomy to declare war and to "make any law without the approbation of a council of nobles," appoints a council of advisors that is comprised only of princes from the provinces that support him. Avellaneda writes that the first "entrevista de Moctezuma con Hernán Cortés fue sostenida bajo un aspecto de perfecta igualdad" (interview between Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés was held on grounds of perfect equality (49/9). Eventually, Cortés will triumph over his indigenous rival due to his talent for mobilizing the Aztecs' enemies, among other factors, but the

author casts both leaders in a negative light[27], signaling to her royal pupil that neither despot should serve as a model for royal leadership. Her complaint against Moctezuma, specifically, is that he has squeezed the residents of the empire's peripheral areas for labor and revenue, thus turning them into enemies and creating the fractures that Guatimozín, his youthful successor, will strive to unify in the book's later chapters. In other words, Moctezuma is the Ferdinand VII to Isabel's Guatimozín.

Despite the roles of prominence that she affords to Cortés and Moctezuma in Books 1 and 2, Avellaneda does not allow the reader to lose sight of her chosen protagonist. As I have said, the author introduces Guatimozín in Book 1, Chapter 2, as one of Moctezuma's three closest advisors. Of course, there is no record in any archive that the emperor ever called this meeting, and if he had arranged to discuss Cortés with leaders from the loyal provinces, he would have wanted to meet with Guatimozín's father, whom the author calls "el digno rey de Tacuba" (the worthy ruler of Tacuba)—rather than Guatimozín, the prince (165). Avellaneda justifies her protagonist's presence at this meeting by depicting his father as old and hardly able to complete the journey to Tenochtitlan, though these details are not substantiated by her sources[28]. What is

[27] I am speaking generally. At times, the author presents the two despots sympathetically, depicting, for example, Moctezuma's regret for his tyrannical actions and Cortés's reluctance to execute Guatimozín. These moments, which highlight the weaknesses that led these characters to undertake violent, authoritarian actions, only reinforce Avellaneda's argument that neither Moctezuma nor Cortés offers a model of imperial leadership that Isabel should follow.

[28] In her words: "La poca salud del señor de Tacuba le obligaba a no salir casi nunca de sus estados, y aunque la capital de aquéllos estuviese muy cercana a [Tenochtitlan], hacía muchos meses que no se le había visto en dicha corte, cuando le trajo a ella la solemne convocatoria" (The delicate health of the lord of Tacuba did not permit him to leave his States often, and although his capital was quite near [Tenochtitlan] it was many years since he had been in that court, at any of the solemn conventions" (165/123).

important here is that the author inserts Guatimozín into her account of the Conquest of Mexico from the very beginning, whether the specific episodes that she is relating are drawn from her imagination (like the meeting described in Chapter 2) or the texts comprising the official historical record. As the ever-present protagonist of the novel's first two books, Guatimozín bears witness to most of the events unfolding around him.

According to Lukács, historical novels written after the fashion of Scott's *Waverley* feature two kinds of characters. On the one hand, there are the "eminent and all-embracing" characters who become the leaders of historical movements and whose names readers may already know when they crack these novels' covers (36). On the other hand, there are the "decent and average" characters who represent factions within the era's milieu (36). Though the latter characters are often inspired by research, they are typically invented by authors with the express purpose of serving as protagonists in historical novels. In the case of *Waverley*, the "eminent" character is Charles Edward Stuart, the leader of the 1745 Jacobite Uprising, while the "average" character is Edward Waverley, an imagined participant in the rebellion who relays an account of the deeds of the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" that is filtered through his own infrequent interactions with him. For Lukács, a Marxist, the "everyman" character in the novels of Scott and his disciples offers evidence that after the French Revolution bourgeois writers were learning how to make themselves rather than aristocrats the protagonists of history. *Guatimozín*, which casts a creole avatar in the role of the "everyman," demonstrates one way that New World writers appropriated Scott's anti-aristocratic methods for anti-colonial ends.

Because Avellaneda makes Guatimozín, an actual person who is also a prince and emperor, her protagonist, Lukács would probably dismiss the novel as a barren corruption of the Scott model. Considering the praise he heaps on Scott for developing characters who are the "concrete children of their age," rather than anachronistic incarnations of their author's age, the Hungarian critic might also object to Avellaneda's white-washing of the Guatimozín character to make him more palatable to a white nineteenth-century audience. However, when one looks past class and historical accuracy, one sees that Guatimozín serves as both an "average" and "eminent" character. To understand this point, I suggest dividing the novel, which consists of four Books, into halves.

In Books 1 and 2, Guatimozín is an "everyman," at least as far as his political commitments are concerned. (The author, foreshadowing the character's eventual rise to greatness, distinguishes him from his fellow Aztecs in other aspects like his appearance and his devotion to his family.) In these books, the author describes events occurring prior to Guatimozín's ascension, beginning with Cortés's arrival to Tenochtitlan and concluding with the conquistadors' expulsion from that city in the period of outrage following Moctezuma's death. Importantly, she imbues the Tacuban prince with one of the same features that Scott ascribes to Waverley: Though he ultimately joins the Aztec uprising, Guatimozín is, up until that point, an observing waverer. He is identified as a "middle-of-the-road" character in his first speech, which appears in the meeting between Moctezuma and his advisors. How, the emperor inquires, shall he respond to the foreign men who have committed violence along the empire's borders and now request to enter

the capital city as friends? Representing one side of the ideological pole, Moctezuma's brother Quetlahuaca advises him to honor the Spaniards' request. Representing the other, Cacama, the hot-headed Prince of Texcoco, advises putting them all to death. When the emperor turns, finally, to Guatimozín, the youngest man present, he receives what Lukács would call a "'middle way' between the extremes": Guatimozín suggests that Moctezuma admit the foreign soldiers but send them quickly on their way if they do not offer a compelling reason to stay within the city's walls (33). History has determined that Guatimozín will become emperor and lead a valiant battle against the occupying Spanish army, but at the outset of the novel Avellaneda depicts him more as a curious witness to history than as an actor. Even after Cortés reveals his imperial intentions and imprisons Moctezuma, Guatimozín is reluctant to join the other princes' efforts to liberate him. As he reminds Cacama in Chapter 12, "La conspiracia" (The conspiracy), Moctezuma entered Cortés's prison cell voluntarily. Any action taken to free him from a bondage he brought upon himself would defy the emperor's will and risk inciting his wrath. Again, this is the response of a character who is not willing to commit to taking action.

As a waverer in these first two books and a character mostly of Avellaneda's own invention, Guatimozín is able to serve as an "average" foil for the novel's "eminent" characters. Included among the latter are Moctezuma and Cortés as well as Cortés's translator (and mistress) Doña Marina—historical figures whose names would have been familiar to readers in the mid nineteenth century. It is through the eyes of Guatimozín that the author chronicles Moctezuma's descent into superstitious paralysis and Cortés's rise

to his position as the most powerful individual in the New World in Books 1 and 2. However, in Books 3 and 4, which see Guatimozín's coronation and thus his entry into the official Spanish record, he the becomes an "eminent" character in his own right. Borrowing Lukács's words, one might say that Avellaneda uses the earlier books to "individualiz[e]" the prince who would become the last Aztec emperor

> in such a way that certain, purely individual traits of character, quite peculiar to [him], are brought into a very complex, very live relationship with the age in which [he] live[s], with the movement which [he] represent[s] and endeavor[s] to lead to victory. (47)

Among other things, she offers an explanation for how such a young warrior rallied the support he needed to claim the throne at a perilous moment in his people's history. However, once Guatimozín becomes the emperor he moves from the center of the novel to its margins, in accordance with the Scott model. He leads battles and executes other actions that drive the story of the Conquest toward its expected denouement (his capture), but like the "Bonny Prince Charlie" in *Waverley*, he snakes in and out of a narrative that commits increasingly greater space to describing how the "average" characters perceive him. As the novel nears its conclusion, Guatimozín is tortured and executed and his wife, Guacalzinla, emerges as the protagonist in a wholly imagined plot to avenge the deaths of Moctezuma, Guatimozín, and so many others by murdering Cortés. Guacalzinla fails in her attempt on Cortés's life, of course, and she is herself dispatched by Marina.

Ianes argues that since it narrates Guatimozin's rise from youth to imperial leader the novel exhibits qualities of the *Bildungsroman*. In his perspective, the advantage of interpreting the text as a story of Guatimozín's coming of age is that it explains some of

the anachronisms in his characterization that I cited earlier. If Avellaneda's Guatimozín is fair-skinned, monogamous, and able to see the logic in Cortés's military strategies—all qualities the historical Cuauhtémoc almost certainly did not share—then it is because the author modeled him after the heroes of the era's popular romantic novels (132-137). Taking Ianes's argument a step further, I will add that white-washing and modernizing the last emperor also helps endear him to the novel's primary reader, Isabel, who as a member of elite Spanish society was probably also reading the novels of Chateaubriand and other romantic favorites. As I have said, Avellaneda develops Guatimozín as an avatar for creoles enduring the injustices of Spanish imperialism. However, reading his journey not only as an allegory for these circumstances, but also as a chronicle of his radicalization and preparation to become the leader of an empire reveals one of the author's additional purposes—to offer the inexperienced queen a model of selfless, non-authoritarian leadership that she could follow in her own reign.

Though the empires that Guatimozín and Isabel oversee are distinct from one another in numerous ways, Avellaneda manages to highlight certain parallels between them. Most obviously, both rulers ascended their thrones at unusually young ages—Guatimozín in his early twenties, Isabel at thirteen—and once they were there, they found themselves responsible for keeping their subjects safe and their borders intact despite threats from foreign enemies and their own inexperience. As he is dying of smallpox, Moctezuma's brother (and the first man to follow him on the throne), Quetlahuaca, shares his faith in Guatimozín's leadership: "Los dios te han concedido un corazón y una

inteligencia clara como el sol: tu razón se ha madurado temprano por has vivido en días de agitación y desventura" (The gods have given you a tranquil heart and intelligence as clear as the sun: your judgment has ripened early because you have lived in days of adventure and agitation; 276/230). If Isabel's temperament was as fickle as Pérez and other historians allege, then the part of this passage complimenting Guatimozín's heart and intelligence may in her case be an instance of wishful thinking. However, whatever one makes of Isabel's qualifications for the position of queen, it is undeniable that she lived in days of "adventure and agitation." In just thirteen years of life she had borne witness to endless political strife at home and the unraveling of the Spanish Empire's colonies and influence abroad. The "agitation" that caused the greatest threat to Isabel's well-being as a child was her uncle Carlos's crusade to remove her from his own path to the crown. Perhaps because she knows the Carlist Wars still haunted the queen, Avellaneda points out that she is not the first sovereign to have his or her place at the head of a mighty empire contested. Guatimozín is unanimously elected emperor by the Aztec council charged with the task of naming Quetlahuaca's successor, but his claim on the throne is challenged by Cortés, who launches a new series of attacks on Tenochtitlan ostensibly in order to return the throne to its rightful occupant—Moctezuma's son, a child, who is in Cortés's custody and easily manipulated by the conquistador.

Avellaneda composed Books 3 and 4 between 1844 and 1845, judging from the details she shares in the letter to Tassara that I cited above. It may be because she still had the coronation of Isabel in mind that she describes the coronation of Guatimozín in such

thorough detail and even praises him using some of the same words that she had utilized in the poem that won Isabel's friendship back in 1843. In the poem she composed for Isabel's coronation, Avellaneda had said that the "grito" (shout) announcing her ascension in Spain would elicit an "eco fiel" (loyal echo) from the colonies on the other side of the Atlantic. Similarly, in *Guatimozin*, the author depicts the praise for the new emperor as both a shout and an echo: "el grito encontró un eco fiel en todas las provincias adonde los veloces correos de la metrópoli hicieron llegar rápidamente la inesperada noticia de la muerte de Quetlahuaca" (the cry found a faithful echo in all of the provinces whither the swift couriers of the metropolis had rapidly carried the unexpected news of the death of Quetlahuaca; 277/231-2). If Guatimozín is Isabel and Tenochtitlan her court, then the distant provinces echoing her praise include the colonies on the empire's edge, whose residents had been waiting for a sovereign to hear them out and improve their conditions. In a way, this novel, which retells the history of the Conquest from the perspective of a creole who promises her support and allegiance to the queen, is, in itself, as sure a sign as any that that echo exists.

In the chapter "La coronación" (The coronation), the author addresses the practice of human sacrifice for the first time. The fact that the topic does not figure into the novel until this rather late moment is notable in itself, as human sacrifice is a custom that had fascinated European writers for centuries. Even more interesting is Avellaneda's defense of the practice as "un requisito indispensable del ceremonial de la coronación" (an indispensable part of the coronation ceremony; 279/243). As she explains:

> Nosotros, que acabamos de describir con imparcial veracidad y profundo horror, los sacrificios cruentos que deshonraban la religión azteca, como en otros tiempos la egipcia, la griega, etcétera, no olvidamos tampoco que la culta Europa inmolaba también víctimas humanas al Dios del amor y de misericordia, con tan fanático celo como los *bárbaros* de México a sus belicosas deidades. ¿Buscaremos rasgos de un civilización más adelantada que la que se lee en la sangrienta piedra de los teocalis mexicanos, en las hogueras de la Inquisición, a cuya fatídica luz celebraba España el acrecentamiento de su poder y los nuevos resplandores de su gloria? (287-288)
>
> (We, who have just pictured, with impartial veracity and profound horror, the inhuman sacrifices which dishonored the Aztec religion, as, in former times, the Egyptian, the Greek, etc., do not forget, either, that European religions also immolated human victims to the God of love and mercy with the same fanatic zeal as the *barbarians* of Mexico to their warlike deities. Shall we find marks of a civilization more advanced than that of which we read in the bloody stone of the Mexican *teocallis*, in the bonfires of the Inquisition to whose fitful light Spain celebrated the growth of her power, and the fresh splendors of her glory?; 243)

Avellaneda defends human sacrifice in this passage by drawing comparisons that convey subtly different arguments. First, she points out that the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans also "immolated human victims." If the reader is willing to accept that these groups which contributed so much to the advancement of European culture are "civilized," then s/he should make the same allowance for the Aztecs. Second, the author suggests that human sacrifice is no worse than the tortures that Spain inflicted upon its victims during the heyday of the Inquisition. This second comparison is quite bold, as the Inquisition remained Spain's official policy well into the nineteenth century and, as Ferrer de Río writes, the authoritarianism of that era still threatened to reassert itself at any time. In the colonies, the Inquisition's brutality arguably had never even been interrupted: The "Ladder Conspiracy," which occurred in Cuba in 1843, gained its name from a torture

method that colonial officials used to extract information from the conspiracy's suspected affiliates, and 1844, when most of the interrogations occurred, is still remembered on the island as "el año del cuero"—the year of the lash. As in the earlier passage describing Guatimozín's body, in these lines Avellaneda offers reasons that European readers should not dismiss the indigenous characters as exotic or under-developed creatures whose behaviors bear no resemblance to their own. Finally, she brazenly calls into question Spain's status as a modern civilization. How can the empire claim superiority over the Americas if it is still committing the same acts of brutality in the nineteenth century that it has condemned the Aztecs for committing in the sixteenth century?

The last commonality between Guatimozín and Isabel that I will note involves the authority of their positions as emperor and queen during eras of substantial cultural shift: Whether they know it (Guatimozín) or not (Isabel), both leaders follow unpopular predecessors who have alienated and persecuted their subjects. Describing the death of Quetlahuaca, the first man to succeed Moctezuma as emperor, Avellaneda remarks that the "ambiciones" (ambitions) of the Moctezumas had marred the throne's legitimacy in the eyes of many of their subjects[29]. Furthermore, she writes that it is Guatimozín's fate to wash "con su sangre del baldón de las ajenas flaquezas" (with his blood the stigma which a weak nature had brought upon the throne; 277/231). Avellaneda is not suggesting that Isabel, like Guatimozín, shall be bloodied in battle and suffer acts of torture. Rather,

[29] Avellaneda is referring primarily to Moctezuma I and Moctezuma II. Though related to both of these men (the first is his father, the second his brother), Quetlahuaca is depicted as a selfless and patriotic ruler—a man who might also have served as a model for ideal imperial leadership had he not died of smallpox shortly after ascending the throne. It was Quetlahuaca who led the Aztecs in their successful attack against the city's Spanish/Tlaxcalan occupiers during the Noche Triste.

she seems more interested in helping the young queen comprehend her place in Spanish history and survive the scrutiny that she will face for her actions. As Pérez indicates, these are not matters with which Isabel expected to concern herself as sovereign, since María Cristina had raised her to believe that the royal will would not be challenged.

In direct contrast, then, to the model of leadership that Isabel was raised to follow, the novel praises Guatimozín for his intelligence, his charity toward subjects who cannot support themselves, and, most importantly, his rejection of the tyranny of his forebears. In the middle of the coronation ceremony, one of the men who elected Guatimozín emperor utters with great relief the following words:

> Regocíjate tú también, ¡oh tierra bendecida!, el señor que te damos no usará de su poder para oprimirte, ni se enervará ante la pompa de la grandeza, haciendo estériles tus entrañas fecundas. ¡Regocijaos todos, pueblos del Anáhuac, porque tenéis un soberano que será el padre del huérfano y el apoyo de la viuda! (280)
>
> (You, too, may rejoice, oh, blessed country! The ruler which we give you will not use his power to oppress you, nor will he become weak amid the pomp and grandeur, making thy prolific lands sterile. Rejoice, people of Anahuac! For you will have a sovereign who will be a father to the orphan and the support of the widow; 234-5)

Avellaneda attributes these lines to an invented sixteenth-century Aztec, and yet they just as easily could have appeared in an issue of *El Laberinto* or any other mid nineteenth-century journal that saw Isabel's ascension as the inauguration of a new, modern era in Spanish history. Though some liberal writers (among them Ferrer de Río) issued warnings that the queen's youth and inexperience made her susceptible to the influence of members of the court who would like to see the empire return to its authoritarian ways,

by and large the metropole's progressive writers responded to her rise to power with unbridled optimism. Fulfilling the elector's expectations, Guatimozín sends diplomats to the Tlaxcalans and other old rivals, proposing treaties and seeking to unify the indigenous civilizations against their common enemy—Cortés. Unfortunately, by the time Guatimozín ascends the throne the rifts within the empire and between the Aztecs and their neighbors have grown so wide they are insuperable, and Cortés exploits the other nations' hostilities to gain support for his own campaign against Tenochtitlan.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to briefly revisit my earlier remark that *Guatimozín* fulfills the requirements of a palimpsest. To be clear, it is a novel that submerges its principal concern beneath layers of colorful characters, engaging plot-lines, and stirring dialogue that make it enjoyable to read and easy to dismiss as a piece of frivolous art—as the author's beau, Gabriel García Tassara, evidently did when he declined to print it in his own journal. The term *palimpsest* receives its iconic treatment in the classic text by Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which studies works by Anglophone women writers that subvert the constraints placed by male authors and critics upon genres like the novel in order to challenge patriarchal discourse and express contrary points of view. Certainly, the scholarship of critics like Gilbert and Gubar paved the way for the recent revitalization of interest in Avellaneda's works, and there is no shortage of feminist readings of the Cuban author's memoirs and autobiographical novel *Sab*, which have been printed together in an English translation by the University of Texas Press and

are featured in prominent studies of gender, abolitionism, and trans/nationalism in nineteenth-century literature, including *Foundational Fictions*. In an essay published the same year as Sommer's book, Susan Kirkpatrick praises *Sab*, writing that Avellaneda's "achievement" in the novel is "pointing to concrete inequalities that inflicted alienation and anguish on those in [the author's] society who were neither male nor white" (129).

Guatimozín has also received attention from feminist scholars, though much less frequently than *Sab*. Stacey Schlau, for one example, offers an extended comparison of the novel and Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Aves sin nido* (Birds without a Nest; 1889) in the book *Spanish American Women's Use of the Word* (2001). Highlighting the author's representation of the Aztec characters, which she says are calculated to build the reader's sympathy for indigenous Americans, Schlau concludes that Avellaneda

> inserted herself into the public life of Spanish America and Spain, as a thinker and an author, as a woman of courage and talent who dared to challenge dominant social stereotypes about female intellectual, imaginative, moral, and emotional inferiority. (78)

While I agree with these words and find Schlau's analysis of *Guatimozín*'s indigenous female characters insightful, I think her interpretation is strengthened by shifting the focus to Avellaneda's Cubanness and friendship with Queen Isabel II. Throughout her book, Schlau (like Gilbert and Gubar before her) collapses the public and private spheres in order to prove that women, who in the public/private binary are often cordoned off from one another, read and wrote for one another (55). As she writes in the chapter on Avellaneda and Matto de Turner, "women writers have contributed to establishing one another's authority and authorship" (55). Obviously, the relationship between Avellaneda

and Isabel substantiates this claim: Avellaneda, on the one hand, "authorized" Isabel's rule over the island colony by writing poems like the one she delivered at the Liceo de Madrid in 1843, while Isabel, on the other hand, "authorized" Avellaneda's career in letters by offering her hand, attending her plays, and completing other such gestures of support. However, despite her focus on the community aspect of women's writing, Schlau positions Avellaneda as a solitary figure who wrote subversive texts but also longed for admittance into patriarchal structures of recognition such as the Royal Academy, which famously refused to accept her on account of her gender (71).

In fact, despite her rejection from the Royal Academy, Avellaneda was a celebrated author and a known affiliate of the Spanish court. Moreover, her relationship with Isabel spanned the private and public. At roughly the same time that Avellaneda was pleading with the young queen to marry an older man better equipped to rule the empire, she was offering her an education about the plight of Cuban creoles and the transgressions of the empire's previous rulers. Like the histories compiled by the empire's *Cronistas*, which were often printed for the public but intended for the eyes of the court, the historical novel is a genre that blurs the public and the private. It draws on public records and circulated in public spaces, but it was most often consumed in private by women and children—both individuals whose positions in society were defined by their relation to the home. Both a chronicle and a domestic novel, *Guatimozín* aims to orient the unprepared Queen to accept and do honor to her role as the ruler of an

oppressive regime that is aching for progress. Avellaneda clarifies the importance of this task in the dying Quetlahuaca's final speech to Guatimozín:

> Tú eres, pues, el elegido para oponerte al desborde fatal de un volcán que va reventar bajo tus plantas. Si el triunfo corona tus esfuerzos tú serás grande entre los grandes, dichoso entre los dichosos, y harás que tu reino sea famoso y respetado mucho más allá de toda la extensión de las aguas; pero si sucumbes… ¡Oh Guatimozín!… tu nombre no morirá contigo y él bastará a salvar la gloria del nombre de los aztecas… ¡Ven! acércate… que te bendiga un rey moribundo… (276)
>
> You are the one chosen to place yourself on the fatal border of a volcano which may burst under your feet. If triumph crowns your efforts, you will be greatest amongst the greats, happiest amongst the happy, and your kingdom shall be even more famous and respected across the waters; but if you fall… Oh, Guatimozín!… Your name will not die with you, and it will be sufficient to salvage the glory of the name of the Aztecs… Come, draw near… that a dying king may bless you. (230)

Like the poem Avellaneda prepared for the Queen's coronation, Quetlahuaca's speech recalls the image of the Atlantic Ocean and encourages Guatimozín/Isabel to take actions that will gain the respect of people who live "across the waters." Why Guatimozín should care how famous he is in Europe is uncertain, but why Isabel should care how her reign is perceived in Cuba—one of Spain's last remaining colonies, an irreplaceable source of wealth, and a land rocked by imperial violence and discontented subjects—is clear.

Though *Guatimozín*, like nearly all of Avellaneda's works, was composed and first enjoyed in metropolitan Spain, it is a fundamentally Cuban novel. The author wrote it to defend the trespasses committed by Cuban intellectuals like the young men who clustered around the charismatic figure of Domingo Del Monte. Moreover, she turned to the historical novel to build the empire's support for reforming Cuban relations, just as

Del Monte had suggested some years earlier. To an extent, the book expresses a regional identity that affirms the experiences of creoles to the exclusion of other social classes like peninsular Spaniards and the descendants of indigenous groups that had long been subjugated. However, as I shall discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, this is an identification that will grow in strength and precision in Conquest novels published later in the century by writers in Mexico and the United States, whose approaches to the Conquest of Mexico differ from that of Avellaneda because they inhabited stretches of the same land mass that had once belonged to Moctezuma, Cuauhtémoc, and the other Aztec heroes whose names are recorded in the chronicles. For mainland American writers, the Conquest is not only a convenient allegory; it is an event that can and indeed will be repeated.

Chapter 2: The History of the Conquest of the Mexican Archive: *The Fair God; or, The Last of the 'Tzins* (1873) by Lew Wallace

> First in order of event was the career of Hernán Cortés from the time he took command of the expedition which resulted in the discovery of Mexico to the surrender of the last king. The story is perfect—so perfect that if these were yet days of the demi-gods, the solid American vote would lift the bold Spanish niches above Perseus and Jason. We read it, and Mexico rises along our southern horizon a confused blending of temples, gods, palaces, crowns and emperors, steel clad Christians and feathered infidels, chambers of gold, legions of slaves, and over them all the glamor of battle and conquest.
>
> Wallace, Lecture on "Mexico and Mexicans" (10)

English-Language Conquest Novels of the 1840s

In the decades following Texas's secession from Mexico (1836) and the outbreak of the Mexican-American War (1846-1847), there appeared, in the United States, a smattering of romantic novels set in Tenochtitlan/Mexico City at the time of the Spanish Conquest. From a commercial perspective, Lew Wallace's *The Fair God; or, The Last of the 'Tzins* was the most successful of these novels. According to Irving McKee, one of the author's biographers, the book sold north of 7,000 copies in its first year[1] and retained an audience into the twentieth century (126). Between 1873 and 1905, it sold an estimated 145,750 copies and was republished in more than thirty editions, including

[1] As McKee explains, this was "a good sale in days when pirated foreign novels forced [US] American authors out of the field, and in the midst of the panic of 1873" (126). As a point of comparison, the author's second novel, *Ben-Hur*, sold 2,800 copies in its first seven months and then experienced a sharp decline in sales (McKee 171). Of course, *Ben-Hur* would ultimately supplant *The Fair God* as the more popular book.

translations into Swedish and, possibly, Spanish[2]. These signs of longevity place the novel in contrast to competing works with similar settings like Joseph Holt Ingraham's *Montezuma, the Serf; or, The Revolt of the Mextili: A Tale of the Last Days of the Aztec Dynasty* (1845), Edward Maturin's *Montezuma, the Last of the Aztecs: A Romance* (1845), and W.W. Fosdick's *Malmiztic the Toltec and the Cavaliers of the Cross* (1851), which were rarely reissued[3] and never marketed to non-Anglophone readers. The novel's popularity in the 1890s coincided with a resurgence of interest in fictional accounts of the Conquest of Mexico, and it was sold alongside related novels published in the decade, including Thomas Janvier's *The Aztec Treasure House: A Romance of Contemporaneous Antiquity* (1890), Kirk Munroe's *The White Conquerors: A Tale of Toltec and Aztec* (1893), and British writer H. Rider Haggard's *Montezuma's Daughter* (1893).

Leaving the novel's sales to the side for a moment, I find *The Fair God* worth singling out among US American-authored novels about the Mexican Conquest for two reasons. First, in contrast to books such as Ingraham's *Montezuma, the Serf*, whose title betrays the author's lack of regard for the minutiae of Conquest history, *The Fair God* strives to render a faithful (if romantic) portrait of indigenous life in the Basin of Mexico. It reveals an intellectual engagement with Conquest historiography that exceeds that of

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[2] Russo and Sullivan confirm the existence of the Swedish translation (313). McKee claims that a Spanish translation appeared in Argentina in the year 1888 (127). However, he may be placing too much faith in a letter collected in the Wallace Papers at the Indiana Historical Society which is dated 1888 and indicates that readers in the South American republic would be interested in a translation—not that a translation was in fact completed. In my research, I have been unable to verify that the novel was available in Spanish during the author's lifetime, though I have learned that Ediciones Vergara in Barcelona, Spain, printed a translation in 1961 under the title *El dios rubio*. The translation appears in a single, thousand-page volume alongside two of Wallace's other novels, which leads me to believe that it is an abridged version.

[3] To my knowledge, only Fosdick's *Malmiztic, the Toltec*, was reissued in multiple editions (three).

contemporary novelists like Ingraham, Maturin, and Fosdick, and it aims to educate readers in the risks and rewards of imperial expansion even as it entertains them with emotive love plots and gripping displays of derring-do. In this regard, it evidences a continuity in the form of the Conquest novel since Avellaneda's *Guatimozín*, which revised the Conquest narrative perpetuated in the Eurocentric chronicles to instruct a young queen in the history of the abuses the Spanish Empire had committed in the American colonies. Second, since the novel was written over a stretch of thirty years (1844-1873) that witnessed the Mexican-American War, the implementation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), the Civil War in the United States (1861-1865), and the French Intervention in Mexico (1861-1867), it also documents the nation's shifting perspective on its relation to the Spanish-speaking Americas. During these crucial years, US national identity was undergoing a volatile transformation that is suggested by the gaining, losing, and regaining of territory that occurred in the Mexican-American and Civil Wars and that was also playing out on the field of *belles lettres*. As I explain, this period saw not only the rise of Hispanism, the study of Spain and Spanish America, as a field of scholarly study in the United States, but also the devaluation of the romantic novel, which US critics disavowed as unable to meet the demands of postbellum readers. At its heart, this chapter is about how the popular representation of Mexico, particularly the history of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, figured into these transformations.

Despite the popularity it once enjoyed, by the mid twentieth century, *The Fair God* had followed the other, lesser-known novels about the Conquest of Mexico into obscurity. Since then, the only scholar who has offered a substantial reading of the novel

is Gretchen Murphy, the author of *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire*. As Murphy explains, the mid nineteenth century is when the United States' claim to manifest destiny gained a powerful political justification in what would become known as the Monroe Doctrine. This second phrase refers to an approach to foreign policy that has its roots in a speech delivered by the fifth US President, James Monroe, in 1823, and would inform the country's interactions with Spanish America in subsequent administrations. In the speech, Monroe voices his opposition to Europe's continued presence in the Americas, arguing that the continent's efforts to extend its monarchical reaches across the Atlantic jeopardized the "peace and safety" of the United States (qtd. by Murphy, *Hemispheric*, 5)[4]. The line he draws between the eastern and western hemispheres defends the viability of the United States' democratic form of government, which he believes will flourish in the Spanish American republics after they have shaken off the influence of Europe. Thus, despite being couched in the rhetoric of freedom and kinship, the president's remarks express a thinly-concealed belief in the United States' superiority and a desire to propagate US political ideology throughout the areas that Spain had vacated. Within a few decades, this desire to promote the ideals of democracy would mutate into the imperialist call for the United States to claim these areas for its own. "[B]y proscribing future European colonization," Murphy writes, the Monroe Doctrine "promoted US expansion" (*Hemispheric* 6).

Murphy determines that *The Fair God*, specifically, justifies imperial expansion into lands formerly occupied by Spain by establishing a "cross-racial identification" with

[4] Monroe cites three European empires as particular causes for concern: Spain, France, and Austria.

the Aztec characters that suggests that white US Americans, who exemplify the virtues of republicanism and Protestantism, are the redeemers of Cuauhtémoc/Guatamozin and the other native *'tzins*, or lords, who were vanquished by Spanish colonialism (116)[5]. Perhaps the clearest invocation of the Monroe Doctrine arrives toward the narrative's end, when the dying Moctezuma claims that he can see a future, eight generations hence, when the

> tribes [are] newly risen, like the trodden grass, and in their midst a Priesthood and a Cross. An age of battles more, and lo! the Cross but not the priests; in their stead Freedom and God. (468-469)

As Murphy writes, the prophecy "foretells not a return to pre-Columbian purity but rather an Anglicization that fully realizes Guatamozin's nascent nationalism" (114). Moreover, it affirms the presence of the United States in opposition to Spain, the latter of which is represented as a "Priesthood" in adherence to the prevailing myth that Catholicism made Spain a backward, totalitarian empire that committed grave violence against indigenous Americans in the name of the Christian God. As Wallace depicts it here, Spanish influence impedes the spread of United States-style democracy and Protestantism. Thus, its removal is required to clear the way for "Freedom and God."

I agree with Murphy's decision to read *The Fair God* as an artistic embodiment of the Monroe Doctrine, and I often invoke her interpretation in this chapter. However, my analysis breaks with hers in crucial ways. First, I approach the novel as a product of two eras—the 1840s, when Wallace was inspired to write it, and the early 1870s, when he

[5] Like the majority of Conquest novels written in the nineteenth century, this one identifies with members of the Aztec nobility—not with the artisans, laborers, or members of other disenfranchised classes. Among other things, this helps the narrative sever the connection between the Aztecs of the sixteenth century, who are depicted as aristocrats, and the native people of the United States and Mexico in the nineteenth century, who very rarely were able to lay claim to a title like *'tzin*, or lord, which connotes land ownership.

revised and succeeded in publishing it. Though Murphy notes Wallace's participation in the Mexican-American War, her reading focuses on the latter era, which closely followed the author's service as a Major General in the Civil War and the Union's envoy to the republican army in Mexico. In her view, Wallace, who was promised $100,000 by a Mexican official[6] for his help defeating the French occupation, came to see the country as a "legendary land of wealth" waiting to be claimed by US Americans (112). However, by approaching the novel as an outgrowth of the works of Hispanism that were produced by US Americans between the 1820s and 1840s, I am able to reveal nuances in Wallace's support for expansionism that go unnoticed by Murphy, including his belief that the United States should exploit the Mexican historiographical archive but should not annex additional Mexican land. Second, I defend my interpretation with reference to sources that Murphy did not consult, including the chronicles and histories upon which the novel is based and unpublished materials located in the Wallace Collection at the Indiana Historical Society.

Generally, this chapter strives to illuminate the path that led white US Americans from a general belief in manifest destiny (in the 1820s-1840s) to widespread support for intervention and empire-building in Spanish America (in the 1870s-1890s). Rather than tell this story through texts written at unique points along this trajectory, I reveal the progression of the nation's transnational, imperial identity as it manifests in one text with a remarkably long history of composition and consumption. As I explain, Wallace boosts the United States' claim on Mexican indigenous history by defending the moral authority

[6] José María Jesús Carvajal, who was then the Governor of Tamaulipas. See Morsebergers, Chapter 15.

and intellectual rigor of US Hispanism and utilizing the conventions of the historical novel. Since novel-writing was not accepted by the author's peers in Indiana as a respectable avocation and the historical novel, in particular, had fallen out of critical favor by the time the text finally appeared in print, the author adopts a defensive tone to deliver a lesson on imperial restraint that ultimately fell on deaf ears. Grounded in the Hispanism of the 1820s, revised to reflect the author's experiences in the Civil War, and still enjoying wide circulation when the United States fought Spain for control of the Caribbean in 1898, *The Fair God* depicts US Americans as the heirs to the legacy, if not the physical terrain, of Tenochtitlan, a city that had been destroyed as much by Cortés as by three and a half centuries of Spanish negligence and Mexican incompetence.

The Emergence of Hispanism in the United States

In 1843, William H. Prescott published *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, a romantic, three-volume account of Hernán Cortés's subjugation of the Aztec Empire that captured the imagination of Western readers and established the United States as a world leader in the scholarship of Spain and Spanish America. Wallace, who is depicted by his biographers as an intractable, self-educating youth, discovered a copy of the *History* in the study of his father, David Wallace, a lawyer who had served as Governor of Indiana from 1837 to 1840. Riveted by Prescott's portrayal of the heroic clash between Aztec and Spanish civilizations, Lew decided that he held in his hands the material for a novel: "I would write, and the Conquest of Mexico would be my theme" (qtd. in Morsebergers 18). For the next few years, he drafted the novel—which he called *The Last of the 'Tzins* in

homage to Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*—in the evenings after leaving his work transcribing legal documents for the county clerk.

When the United States declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846, the nineteen-year-old author read with great anticipation the reports of armed exchanges taking place in the recently-annexed state of Texas. That same month, after learning that he had failed his first attempt at the bar examination, he joined the war himself. He thus became one of many volunteer soldiers who could trace his inspiration to join the war to his reading of Prescott. This occurrence was common enough that more than one scholar has concluded that Prescott's *History* was a cause of the war, though the historian, like his friends Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, condemned it forcibly in his other writings[7]. In fact, the text was a culmination of the English-speaking world's longstanding interest in Spain and the Hispanist scholarship that US authors had been undertaking since the 1820s. In many cases, Hispanists like Prescott believed they were authoring works that would reveal to their fellow US Americans the moral depravity and unsustainability of imperialism. However, their critiques were grounded in assumptions about the cultural inferiority of Spaniards and their American descendants that laid the groundwork for the anti-Spanish, anti-Mexican sentiment that would drive men like Wallace to the Mexican border in 1846-1847. As Anna Brickhouse remarks in *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*, texts authored by early US Hispanists "held the seeds of US imperialism," in spite of their intentions to curtail it.

[7] For more, see Wertheimer's *Imagined Empires*, Chapter 3.

The Anglophone interest in Spanish history and culture is unsurprising given the centuries-old enmity between the British and Spanish Empires. Often, their rivalry played out in the American colonies, which offered an arena for each empire to demonstrate its superiority relative to the other. Spain, for its part, did what it could to restrict England's (and, for a time, the United States') access to its colonies, fearing that English speakers would spread the heretical ideas associated with the Protestant Reformation and stir discontent among white creoles, black slaves, and the descendants of subjugated indigenous groups. US Americans inherited England's interest in the lands beyond the reach of their southern borders. However, prior to the 1820s, the Anglophone reader who desired to learn about New Spain or the Conquest of Mexico had access to a fairly small number of source texts, most of which had been completed and translated into English within the first few decades of the Conquest. The ignorance of US Americans concerning events that had occurred between 1521, when Cortés finally captured Tenochtitlan, and 1821, when Spain recognized Mexican independence, manifests in the "Mexico and the Mexicans" lecture that Wallace delivered many times between the late 1860s and the turn of the twentieth century (Russo and Sullivan 373). In the excerpt that I have reprinted as this chapter's epigraph, the author demonstrates how reading the chronicles of sixteenth-century conquistadors could lead a nineteenth-century US American to believe that Mexico is "a confused blending of temples, gods, palaces, crowns and emperors, steel clad Christians and feathered infidels, chambers of gold, [and] legions of slaves," though hardly any of these descriptors accurately reflected Mexico in the nineteenth century. After illustrating the grandeur of Tenochtitlan at the time of Cortés's arrival, the author

turns to the next event in Mexican history with which his audience is familiar—the career of Aaron Burr, the "first of modern filibusters," who was accused of conspiring with foreigners to found a political dynasty of his own in Mexico in the early 1800s (10).

Of course, Spain collected its own information about its colonies. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the empire amassed so many documents related to New World colonization that King Ferdinand II found it fit to designate a *Cronista mayor de las Indias* (Official Historian of the Indies) in 1571. However, as R. Tripp Evans explains in *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination, 1820-1915* (2004), in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Spanish court took comparatively less interest in New Spain's indigenous groups, which it considered biologically and spiritually inferior. The metropole's disregard for pre-Cortesian history took a heavy toll on the indigenous architecture located in New Spain, which colonial officials either incorporated into new structures or abandoned to nature (11). In the 1770s, King Carlos III commissioned the crown's first official archaeological expeditions. But, as Evans reveals, the purpose of these expeditions was to assess whether the ruins could somehow generate revenue for an empire that desperately needed it. Like a number of Spain's records of the region's Pre-Cortesian past, the reports composed by explorers like Antonio Del Río and Guillermo Dupaix were guarded from colonists and foreigners alike in the viceroyalty's archives[8].

[8] The obvious exception here is the travelogue of Alexander von Humboldt, the Prussian naturalist who gained the empire's permission to conduct a survey of Spanish America between 1799-1804. Evans points out that Humboldt's expedition was approved while the court was commissioning other reports about indigenous sites that might have monetary value. His point is that Spain saw Humboldt's trip in a similar light and hoped that he would discover resources that could be turned into new sources of revenue (23).

All this changed after the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1808, France invaded Spain and sent its king, Ferdinand VII, to a prison in Bayonne, on the French side of the border. In the Americas, colonial officials were unsure how to operate under an occupied metropole. While some called for the court to relocate to one of the colonies, essentially surrendering the Iberian Peninsula to Napoleon Bonaparte, others voiced their support for French rule, which promised to break from the Inquisition policies that had governed the Spanish Empire for three centuries. In 1810, in the midst of this uncertainty, the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla uttered his famous "Grito de Dolores" (Cry from Dolores) sermon and led an army of poor, indigenous, and mestizo civilians on a rampage against elites and colonial officials in several New Spanish settlements. Looking back on these events years later, Mexico's nationalist historians would proclaim the "Grito de Dolores" the beginning of the country's war for independence and Hidalgo, who was executed by the colonial government in 1811, its first martyr[9]. However, as Rafael Rojas, the author of *Las repúblicas de aire: Utopía and desencanto en la revolución de Hispanoamérica,* points out, Hidalgo did not advocate for New Spain's secession from the empire. Rather, he believed that he was defending the interests of Spain and Catholicism against a class of New Spaniards that had become *afrancesado* (Frenchified)[10]. When Ferdinand VII reclaimed the throne in 1813, he refused to recognize the Constitution that liberal parliamentarians had drafted in his absence and which would have granted autonomy to

[9] For example Ireneo Paz, the author of the novel I discuss in Chapter 3, who lauded Hidalgo in a *leyenda* (legend) he published in the 1880s, and Enrique Krauze, the author of *Mexico: Biography of Power* (1997).
[10] At this time, being *afrancesado* meant sharing some of the philosophical convictions that had fueled the French Revolution (1789-1799). In this light, Hidalgo's uprising might even be called *anti*-revolutionary.

the colonies. In response, the liberals in New Spain who had born the brunt of Hidalgo's raids took up arms against the imperial government. Eventually, their desire to become an autonomous unit within the empire gave way to a call to leave the empire altogether. In 1821, at the end of a costly war, Spain agreed to recognize Mexican independence.

After severing ties with Spain, Mexico turned to organizing its government. The difficulty of this work was compounded by disagreements about whether Mexico should continue the monarchical structure of governance it had known under the Spanish Empire or follow the example of the United States in establishing a constitutional republic. Moreover, political leaders buckled under the pressure to incorporate into the national body the inhabitants of lands that had not fallen within the borders of New Spain prior to independence, including a chunk of Central America (which would secede in 1823) and a wide swath of land north of the Rio Grande River (which Mexico would relinquish to the United States in 1848). Spain's principal rivals in the New World, England and France, took advantage of the political unrest in Mexico to pilfer a number of documents that had been secreted away in the viceregal archives. As Evans reports, the accounts of ruins that Del Río, Dupaix, and other explorers had compiled around the turn of the nineteenth century mysteriously appeared in Europe in English and French translations. These translations, which Evans calls acts of "scholarly espionage," whet the European reader's appetite for more information about the history and landscape of Mexico, which had been isolated from the rest of the world while under the thumb of Spain (34). However, the unauthorized reproduction of these texts vexed Mexican elites, who wanted to distance themselves from their colonial roots in the eyes of the international community.

Iván Jaksić, in *The Hispanic World and American Intellectual Life, 1820-1880* (2007), argues that US Americans were interested in the history of Spanish America because they, too, were striving to define the identity of their nation. They found Mexico a convenient foil for distinguishing the United States from the rest of the world because of its myriad differences in religion, language, racial heritage, geography, and system of governance. US Hispanists believed that the Spanish Empire was crumbling before their eyes and thus cast the empire as the tragic hero in a cautionary tale about the inevitable failure of Empire. When the United States began to evidence signs that it would annex Mexican territory (Texas) and intervene in Mexico's internal affairs, these intellectuals worried that the nation would repeat Spain's errors. Prescott, for example, warned that the "evil" in the annexation of Mexican lands "assumes a tenfold magnitude; for it flows not so much from the single act as from the principle on which it rests, and which may open the way to indefinite perpetration of such acts" (qtd. in Ernest 233). Hispanists used their writings on Spain to chart the path that nations travel toward imperialism and destruction with the hope that the leaders of the United States would alter their own course. In the words of Jaksić, their "remarkable emphasis on the history of the Spanish empire, which is so characteristic of nineteenth-century America, was in the end a didactic reminder of what the United States should not become" (3).

Though Mexicans deplored Europe's efforts to ransack their archives, they did not initially resist the efforts of US intellectuals to research the history of the Aztecs and other native groups, or to conduct archaeological expeditions. In the years prior to the Mexican American War, Mexican republicans tended to believe that the two nations were

engaged in mutually-reinforcing projects of trans/national identity formulation[11]. As Jacksić reports, Prescott, whose near-blindness prevented him from traveling to Mexico, relied on the enthusiastic assistance of Mexican scholars like Lucas Alamán, who in turn ensured that the *History* was translated into Spanish and annotated it with corrections and competing interpretations of the historical evidence[12]. Mexicans "read selectively" from the texts that US Hispanists produced, using this scholarship that had been printed abroad to disavow the legacy of European colonialism that troubled them at home (Jaksić 5).

The first Conquest novels appeared within a few years of Mexican independence and benefited more from the enthusiasm surrounding the opening of Mexico's archives and archaeological sites than on the reports being compiled by historians, archaeologists, and other experts. For example, *Jicoténcal* (1826), which was printed anonymously in Philadelphia, uses the Conquest narrative to encourage the hemisphere's sovereign nations to stand beside Cuba in its struggle to overthrow Spanish colonialism. However, it invokes only two works of Conquest historiography, Solís's *Historia de la conquista de México* and Bartolomé de las Casas's *Breve relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Brief account of the destruction of the Indies; 1552). Both of these titles had been widely available, in Spanish and English, before Mexico broke from the Spanish Empire.

A few years later, US physician and author Robert Montgomery Bird revisited the Conquest in two novels that were released in quick succession, *Calavar; or, The Knight*

[11] There were exceptions, of course. As Rojas reports, the friar Servando Teresa de Mier was a loud critic of the United States. Even in the 1820s, he cautioned that the nation wanted to claim Mexican territory for its own, and he urged his compatriots not to depend on US Americans for protection (233).
[12] For more about Prescott's transnational web of researchers, see Jaksić, Chapter 7.

of the Conquest: A Romance of Mexico (1834) and *The Infidel; or, the Fall of Mexico* (1835). The first of these novels opens in nineteenth-century Mexico City, where a priest claiming to be a descendant of Moctezuma presses into the hands of a US American traveler a bundle of manuscripts that the Spanish/Mexican government has strived to suppress. The manuscripts contain a history of Mexico, beginning with the Conquest, that the priest has recorded in his own hand. Anticipating the critical remarks that Avellaneda would make in the footnotes of *Guatimozín*, the priest deplores the Eurocentric histories that had already been written about his *patria* (homeland). As he says, "the privilege of chronicling and perverting the history of [Mexico] is permitted only to Spaniards, to strangers, to Gachupins[13]" (17). Despite his contempt for "strangers," the priest entrusts the manuscripts to the traveler and urges him to translate and publish them in the United States, for there they shall have the chance to accomplish his goal of raising the world's estimation of his ancestors, the Aztecs. As for his compatriots, the Mexicans, the priest declares that they would read his account "in vain," for "[t]hey are a thousand years removed from civilization, and the wisdom of this book they would read as folly" (19). The author acknowledges that Mexican elites want to divorce themselves from their pre-revolutionary past, but he depicts this desire as a marker of backwardness rather than as evidence of their desire to enter into modernity. Moreover, as Murphy observes in her essay "The Hemispheric Novel in the Post-Revolutionary Era" (2011), the author glosses over Mexico's transition from a colony of Spain to an independent republic by referring

[13] The last of these words refers to white Spaniards who were born in Spain, in contrast to the creoles (or *criollos*) who were born in the colonies. By the 1800s, it had acquired an insulting connotation.

to Mexican presidents as viceroys (557). In sum, the novel lends voice to the pernicious belief that Mexican liberals, like the Spanish colonial officials who came before them, are too blundering and untrustworthy to serve as the stewards of their own national history.

Bird's deprecatory portrait of nineteenth-century Mexicans is consistent with the broader argument being made by US Hispanists that the Spanish Empire was negligent in its role as the custodian of Mexican indigenous history. His pejorative opinion of Spain is rooted in the bitter competition between the British and Spanish Empires. England, in an effort to discredit Spain, propagated an image of its Catholic adversary as inefficient, authoritarian, and violent. It circulated inflammatory passages from Las Casas's *Breve relación* that depicted the Spanish Empire as a ruthless exterminator of native peoples. After it outlawed the slave trade in 1807, England strived to paint Spain as a brutalizer of African slaves as well. Eventually, these negative depictions crystallized in what became known as *la leyenda negra*, or the Black Legend. In *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (2005), María DeGuzmán writes that in the imagination of white, Protestant US Americans, "'the Spaniard' became a typological emblem of religious and political intolerance, tyranny, misrule, conspiracy, cruelty, barbarity, bloodthirstiness, backwardness, slothfulness, and degeneracy" (4-5). In Conquest novels like Munroe's *The White Conquerors* (1893), which appeared later in the century, the Black Legend would be replaced by a fervent pride in white supremacy and the "white man's burden" to civilize communities of color. However, in *Calavar* and other novels published prior to the 1890s, Cortés and his companions are frequently villainized and imbued with the characteristics included in DeGuzmán's list.

After Mexico and the other mainland colonies withdrew from the Spanish Empire, US Americans continued to invoke the Black Legend—with a difference. Shifting the target of the stereotype from Spain to its former colonies, they speculated that white Spanish Americans were as degenerate as their ancestors from the other side of the Atlantic and thus inferior to white US Americans who descended from other regions of Europe[14]. Wallace, in the speech on "Mexico and the Mexicans," uses the language of filiation to justify the connection between Spain and Mexico in the US public imaginary: "Spain was [Mexico's] mother, and she transmitted all her psychic traits to her offspring… it was natural that the child should be incapable of government and the better things of the century" (27-28). Even Hispanists who opposed the Mexican-American War disseminated derogatory portraits of Spain and thus indirectly defended the United States' intervention in Spanish America. As DeGuzmán writes,

> Legends of civilizing and glory-gaining accomplishments, as well as sensational retellings of Spanish atrocities against the Native Americas, served a double narrative function in providing justification for the expansionist ambitions of the United States. These double narratives of magnificence and atrocity implicitly identified the nineteenth-century United States with discovery, exploration, and triumph while disavowing and displacing Anglo-Americans' own extermination of Native Americans and expropriation of their lands back onto the early decades of Spanish empire in the Americas. (76)

The authors DeGuzmán has in mind here are Prescott, James Russell Lowell, John Fiske, and the other historians of Spain and Spanish America. However, Conquest novelists also created works that served the "double narrative function" of obscuring the imperial violence that the United States had committed against its own native communities, while

[14] This is the "off-whiteness" that DeGuzmán refers to in her subtitle.

encouraging readers to avenge the communities that had been subjugated by Spain many centuries before. *Calavar*, for instance, severs the link between the vanquished Aztecs of the sixteenth century and the indigenous Americans (in Mexico and the United States) of the nineteenth century by portraying the priest as an old, eccentric loner—a man who is likely to die soon and leave the Aztec legacy he has inherited to a white US American. Ultimately, the perception that the "children" of Spain were lazy and degenerate would inflict violence upon Mexicans who became US citizens as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, including the aristocratic ranchers who lived in Alta California. In *Aztlán and Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Creation of Place* (2014), Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena states that squatters and land speculators succeeded in depriving the Californios of the estates their families had inhabited for generations by disparaging them as indolent—"only temporal placeholders, awaiting the arrival of their industrious 'Anglo-Saxon conquerors' who would cultivate and make proper use of the land" (43). However, the violence that (former) Mexicans would suffer from US Americans in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War was presaged and legitimated by the literature US Hispanists had been producing for two decades before the declaration of war.

Invoking the Black Legend in *The Fair God*

After deciding to turn Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* into a historical novel, Wallace availed himself of other sources for information about Spain and Pre-Cortesian Mexico, including the letters of Cortés, the memoirs of Díaz del Castillo, the historical accounts of Las Casas and Bernardino de Sahagún, and, of course,

the writings of previous US Hispanists. As Bird had done with *Calavar*, he inscribes *The Fair God* in the archive of Conquest historiography by presenting the novel as the translation of a tattered manuscript that has passed into the hands of a US American translator after being ignored or suppressed by generations of Spanish/Spanish American bureaucrats. However, the manuscript is not attributed to a character invented by the author to fulfill this narrative purpose, but rather to an actual historical figure, Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl, a mestizo historian and descendent of Quetlahuaca, the first emperor to rule the Aztec Empire after the death of Moctezuma. Though Wallace's use of the Ixtlilxóchitl character reveals a historiographical awareness that sets him apart from many Conquest novelists, it reveals the same prejudices against Spain and its former colonies that had marked earlier Hispanist publications from the 1820s-1840s.

Wallace, who positions himself as the translator of this manuscript, learned about Ixtlilxóchitl from Prescott, who concludes the first volume of the *History* with a sketch of the chronicler's life and principal writings. When Wallace fell in love with the *History*, he was a young man transcribing documents for the Marion county clerk—a task he found mundane and demoralizing. Prescott's portrayal of Ixtlilxóchitl as a noble-blooded grandson of heroes who has been reduced to interpreting hieroglyphics for the New Spanish viceroy may have led Wallace to imagine that he was reading about a kindred spirit. Certainly, the novelist underscores Ixtlilxóchitl's erudition, writing that despite the "trifling" work that he completed for the viceroy he "had ample time for literary pursuits; his enthusiasm as a scholar permitted him no relaxation or idleness" (xiii). Prescott's description of the "extensive library" where Ixtlilxóchitl labored over hieroglyphics,

played traditional songs, and conducted interviews with the last surviving witnesses of the Conquest also informed Wallace's description of the library where Guatamozin, the book's hero, examines maps, manuscripts, and the heads of slain Spanish soldiers (152).

Wallace's reliance on the *History* as a source for information about Ixtlilxóchitl's life leads him to misidentify the chronicler's place in time. Prescott reports that the latter "flourished in the beginning of the sixteenth century," which Wallace takes to mean that he lived in the early 1500s and was a first-hand witness to the arrival of Cortés in 1519. The novelist states, in the "Note" at the front of the book, that he hopes the reader will mistake *The Fair God* for a "personal experience." As he elaborates,

> I judged it best to assume the character of a translator, which would enable me to write in the style of and spirit of one who not merely lived at the time of the occurrences woven into the text, but was acquainted with many of the historical personages who figure therein, and was a native of the beautiful valley in which the story is located. (iii-iv)

In fact, Ixtlilxóchitl did not live "at the time of the occurrences woven into the text" and was not "acquainted with many of the historical personages who figure therein." He was born in the late 1500s, well after the Spanish Empire had instated the viceregal court and the Conquest's best-known participants (Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, Cuauhtémoc, etc.) had died. He took employment with the viceroy, Don Luís de Velasco, in 1608 and completed his best-known work, the *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (History of the Chichimecan nation), between 1610 and 1640. Wallace's confusion about the chronicler's biography is understandable, since Prescott does not print any of these dates in the sketch and the name *Ixtlilxóchitl* often appears in the accounts of the conquistadors, though with

reference to Ixtlilxóchitl II, the King of Texcoco, one of Fernando de Alva's ancestors[15]. Even if Wallace did not knowingly shift the chronicler's birth back a century, the move enhances his argument that Spain is not to be trusted with Mexico's indigenous history. On the one hand, he constructs Ixtlilxóchitl as a "man of great learning" whose career in letters was already underway at the time of Conquest and whose talent was squandered by a viceroy who assigned him the mundane labor of interpreting hieroglyphics (xi). On the other hand, he undermines the role Spain has played in the chronicler's formation by refusing to consider the possibility that his works were commissioned by a representative of Spain who might have been genuinely interested in the stories he related.

Moreover, the author makes no mention of Ixtlilxóchitl's mestizo origin, leaving the unknowing reader to assume that he is an Indian—albeit an Indian who has converted to Christianity. Murphy, who discusses the cross-racial romance between Captain Pedro de Alvarado and Montezuma's daughter, Nenetzin, points out that Wallace kills the latter before the lovers are able to procreate. In her view, the punishment Nenetzin receives for abandoning her indigenous suitor for the most craven and violent of Cortés's soldiers reflects "a racial prejudice central to American literary imagination, one that troubles any familial construction of Indians (or Mestizo Mexicans) as brothers, wives, or children" (115). Her words shed light on Wallace's depiction of Ixtlilxóchitl, as erasing his mixed-race heritage allows the author to avoid the potentially violent and altogether unthinkable

[15] Wallace, writing in the guise of the translator, speculates that the manuscript was forwarded to Spain with the intention of "lighten[ing] the burthens of royalty by an amusement to which, it is known, Charles V was not averse" (xiii). This indicates that the manuscript was written in the mid 1500s, as Charles V—also known as the Holy Roman Emperor—ruled the empire from 1519 to 1556.

sexual union that led to the chronicler's birth. Significantly, both Prescott and Wallace omit *Cortés* when they print Ixtlilxóchitl's full name.

Wallace's refusal to recognize mestizaje also manifests in "Mexico and the Mexicans," which includes a long section purporting to describe "the Mexican people." As he explains, Mexicans are divided into two classes

> between which the division line is drawn almost as rigidly as formerly between master and slave in our country. The first is about a million and half strong, persons of European derivation, mostly Spaniards; the subordinate class on the other hand is about eight millions in number, and composes of persons of Indian descent. (12-13)

Wallace's failure to identify mestizos as a third class or even a contingent of one of the others he names in this passage is remarkable considering that he delivered the speech in the 1880s and 1890s, when Mexico was governed by a president—Porfirio Díaz—whose mixed ancestry was the subject of much debate among US Americans[16]. But perhaps the debate itself led Wallace, who was a conservative by postbellum standards, to minimize mestizaje in both texts. As I have suggested, obscuring mestizaje would have saved the author from having to grapple with a topic that might have upset sensitive readers. Just as importantly, though, it also reinforces the author's ongoing argument that Spanish rule has wrought only devastation upon Mexico. Implying that Ixtlilxóchitl was an Indian who was alive at the time of the Conquest permits Wallace to install the chronicler alongside Montezuma and Cuauhtémoc in the pantheon of noble Aztecs whose grandeur was cut short by the brutal and self-serving behavior of the conquistadors. In fact, Ixtlilxóchitl's death, which is not depicted in the novel, may have been even more agonizing than the

[16] Ruiz discusses US Americans' fascination with Díaz in *Americans in the Treasure House*, Chapter 2.

murders of Montezuma and Cuauhtémoc (at least, in the imagination of the author), as it occurred at the end of many years of enduring a kind of intellectual slavery imposed upon him by an unseeing viceroy. Since the actual descendants of the Aztecs are "subordinate" and unable to defend themselves (and their history) against the abuses the descendants of the conquistadors continue to inflict upon them, the United States must intervene on their behalf. As Murphy puts it, the novel leads the white, US American reader to believe that he or she is responsible for "carrying out Montezuma's will in a contemporary moment that requires the spread of Anglo-American culture and order" (115-116)[17].

Wallace's subscription to the Black Legend is also evident in his portrayal of Spanish characters like Alvarado, who orders the army to butcher a crowd of unarmed Aztec civilians when Cortés leaves him in charge of Tenochtitlan, and Cortés's young page, Orteguilla, who represents the damage that Spanish "chivalry" has wrought upon the Mexican indigenous archive. This second character figures into a series of scenes that take place in the *cû*, or temple, of Quetzalcoatl. Although the Aztec characters recognize Quetzalcoatl as a god—the "fair god" of the book's title—the author leaves open the possibility that he might have been a wise and benevolent mortal who visited the Aztecs and shared foreign knowledge with them. As one character reports,

> He was a wonderfully kind god, who, many ages ago, came into the valley here, and dwelt awhile. The people were then rude and savage; but he taught them agriculture, and other arts… Above all, he taught the princes wisdom in their government. If to-day the Aztec Empire is the strongest in the world, it is owing to Quetzal'. (7)

[17] The novel does not discuss the physical relationship between Cortés and Marina, which would prove such a foundational image for Mexican writers in the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries.

Eventually, Quetzalcoatl was driven away from Tenochtitlan by the very leaders he had educated, leaving only the *cû* and the "arts" he had taught them behind[18]. The *cû* is an imposing brick behemoth with an interior so labyrinthine that only the eccentric old priest Mualox and his protégé, Guatamozin, dare to enter it. Deep beneath the structure, in a cave that opens into an improbable subterranean grotto, Mualox keeps a young woman named Tecetl. An orphan purchased by the priest as an infant, Tecetl is a fragile, Rapunzel-like creature who is unaware of the world that exists beyond the birds and fountains in her cavern. Mualox, who is a mystic, uses the girl to gain intelligence on the peripheral regions of the empire. With the help of an enchanted pearl, he places her in a trance-like state and steers her mind to areas outside the *cû* that she is able to describe in minute detail though she has never visited them herself. Meredith Nicholson shares in *The Hoosiers* (1915) that Wallace based Tecetl's visions on a personal experience: Once, an acquaintance "who was deeply invested in the occult sciences" used a medium to enter the author's mind, and the medium was able to report the author's thoughts exactly as he imagined them (187). In the context of the book, however, Tecetl and the pearl are not only embellishments devised to lend the narrative exotic flair, though they certainly accomplish this purpose. Rather, they offer evidence of Quetzalcoatl's wisdom as well as insight into Aztec culture prior to the arrival of Spain. A delicate, vulnerable woman, Tecetl is the human embodiment of the indigenous Mexican archive, and her fate prefigures the poor treatment this archive will have when it falls into Spanish possession.

[18] Why were the Aztecs so ungrateful? According to Wallace, Quetzalcoatl was a missionary who wanted them to abandon their idols and worship a single god—too bitter a pill for the Aztecs to swallow (7).

Toward the novel's end, Tecetl is discovered by Orteguilla, who admires her form and realizes that he has located a treasure in the heart of the foreboding *cû*. He places a rosary around her neck and leads her outside, into the middle of the clash between Aztec and Spaniard that will soon culminate in the *Noche triste*. Within moments, she is struck dead by a stray arrow. This scene is a clear reference to the Black Legend, which held that Spain did not live up to its promise to Christianize the New World. The page insists that Tecetl wear the rosary, but he does not teach her what it signifies. In fact, the chapter's title, "The Angel Becomes a Beadswoman," suggests that his missionary actions have *decreased* the girl's chances of salvation, as they have reduced her from an "angel" to a mere mortal "beadswoman." Moreover, the scene also demonstrates the inability of Spain to properly care for, or even to correctly *identify*, the traces of Aztec history that should be preserved in archives and written histories. After all, Tecetl is neither a gold-plated bauble that may be stored in the king's coffers nor hieroglyphics that may be translated and entered into an archive[19]. Mistaken for an imperiled maiden and removed from the *cû* for the purpose of confirming Orteguilla's own sense of himself as a chivalric hero, she is a visual representation of what has been lost while the history of Mexico was in the hands of the Spanish Empire and the Republic of Mexico, its offspring. By Wallace's logic, the United States, which has shown its scholarly prowess on the pages of world-revered texts like Prescott's *History*, would treat the delicate memory of the Aztecs with the care it deserves.

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[19] In this respect, she is like the forgotten slave women that M. Jacqui Alexander summons in "Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible" (2005). Her *body* is the "site of memory…even as it is simultaneously insinuated within a nexus of power" (297).

Throughout *The Fair God*, Wallace invokes the related discourses of the Black Legend and the Monroe Doctrine to diminish Spain's and Mexico's efforts to exhume and record the pre-Cortesian history of the Aztecs. In the end, however, the author's most persuasive argument that the United States is the superior custodian of the Mexican indigenous archive is the novel itself. Like Orteguilla, who naively leads Tecetl to her death, Wallace was a literate young man who joined his nation's campaign to invade Tenochtitlan/Mexico City while it appeared to be facing a period of decadent stagnation. The actual Wallace did not advance much farther into Mexico than the Rio Grande River and saw no combat, but the fictional Wallace one meets in the pages of *The Fair God* not only made it to Mexico City but discovered a lost manuscript penned by a descendent of Aztec nobility that he has faithfully translated and published. If, as I have explained, the framing device demonstrates the author's debt to Hispanism and his desire that *The Fair God* be read alongside erudite works like Prescott's *History*, it is also a gesture to general romantic storytelling, which often utilizes a lost letter, manuscript, or other truth-imbued artifact to lend the narrative structure and intrigue. In what remains of this chapter, I will discuss Wallace as a romantic writer, focusing on how opinions circulating about the use and respectability of the historical novel shifted between the 1840s and 1870s and why the author might have seen romantic discourse as the best vehicle for his story about the intellectual ground to be gained by the annexation of the Mexican indigenous archive.

Cuauhtémoc, the Last of the Aztec Librarians

Before *The Fair God* and its even more popular successor, *Ben-Hur,* made Wallace an internationally revered novelist, he was a familiar public figure on both sides of the Rio Grande River. A lawyer by profession (he succeeded in passing the bar exam in 1849, on his second try), he had gained recognition during the Civil War for climbing to the rank of Major General in the Union Army at the unusually young age of 34, for serving on the army commission that tried the accomplices in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and for facilitating cooperation between the Union and the Mexican republican army while the latter was striving to bring an end to the French occupation and the reign of Maximilian I. In two of these roles, the Indiana native suffered devastating blows to his pride: First, within months of being promoted to Major General, he was scapegoated by General Ulysses S. Grant for the large number of casualties incurred in the Battle of Shiloh (1862) and retired from active duty[20]. Second, in Mexico a few years later, he rendered months of service for which he (incorrectly) believed the reinstated government of Benito Juárez would compensate him. Returning home with these embarrassments behind him (and dim political prospects ahead of him), he revived his boyhood dream of embarking upon a career in letters. *The Fair God* was the first of his works to appear in print, and it retains the heroic tone of the novel's first draft (which would have been contemporary with the Conquest novels that appeared in the 1840s), though Wallace revised the narrative to reflect his evolved perceptions of war—and of

[20] For more on Wallace's military career, including his embarrassment at the Battle of Shiloh, see McKee, Chapter 5, Morseberger and Morseberger, Chapters 6-7, and Stephens's *Shadow of Shiloh*.

Mexico[21]. However, as eager as the author was to see the novel that had occupied his imagination for three decades finally in print, he was worried about how it would be received by his neighbors and how adding *novelist* to his list of achievements would impact his already compromised reputation as a man of action.

By 1873, when *The Fair God* was published, the novel, as a genre, had become not only prosperous, but also *respected*, in the urban, cosmopolitan regions of the United States. Particularly the elites who clustered in Boston had come to accept the novel as a "field of genuine art" and novel-writing as a productive labor that merited an amount of prestige and financial recompense (Barrish 10). However, in rural Indiana, the novel had not shed the disrepute that had been cast upon it by earlier detractors who dismissed it as an incoherent and irresponsible genre—tolerable as a past-time for children and women, but unsuitable as a vehicle for the expression of philosophical principles and political calls to action. In the eyes of chauvinist critics, novel-writing was feminine because it produced texts that would be consumed by a primarily female audience and feminizing because it pulled authors and readers away from "manlier" genres like the verse epic, the tragedy, and the essay (Fluck 117)[22]. By the 1840s, the opposition had ebbed somewhat, due, in no small part, to the popularity of the historical novels in Scott's Waverley cycle, which demonstrated that the novel could serve such useful functions as cultivating

[21] Wallace claimed that he wrote the novel's last three books after returning home after the Civil War and the Mexican campaign. Also, as his biographers note, he made so many corrections and changes to the *Fair God* proofsheets that the typesetter complained to the publisher, Osgood. See Morsebergers, Chapter 17.

[22] Trumpener, in the essay "National Character, Nationalist Plots" (1993), discusses the role played by gender in literary markets at the turn of the nineteenth century. She argues that Scott's historical novels bear strong resemblances to the "national tales" being produced around the same time by Edgeworth and other women writers. That cultural elites deemed Scott's novels worthy of being read and modeled (but not these others) is a reflection of the group's preference for male writers.

national belonging and imparting a sense of shared history. But even then the idea that novels were diversions, not works of art that deserved serious consideration, prevailed.

In biographies, Wallace comes across as an energetic, rebellious youth who had a passion for reading and learning though he chafed at the structure of the classroom. In *Lew Wallace: Militant Romantic* (1980), Robert and Katharine Morseberger write that the personal library of Wallace's father "dropped more seed in his son's creative soil than had all of the floggings by the schoolmasters" (17). Especially in his adolescent years, the author reveled in the escape he found in literature. As a schoolboy, he paid less attention to math than the historical novels of Scott, Cooper, and George Payne Rainsford James (Morsebergers 6-12). Later, while enrolled in an Indianapolis seminary, he was, as he put it, "careless and indifferent" in his classes, but thoroughly engaged in the Union Literary Society, which inspired him to compose poetry in the style of Scott's epics and several chapters for a (lost) novel about the First Crusade called *The Man at Arms: A Tale of the Tenth Century* (qtd. in Morsebergers 14). Wallace's father, dismayed by his son's school performance, announced that he would no longer pay for him to attend the seminary and that it was time for him to support himself. As a result, the author sought employment in the office of Robert S. Duncan, the county clerk, whom he hoped would tutor him in the law. However, he found the transcription work Duncan assigned him mundane. Again, he found reprieve in literature, and, beginning in 1844, he would research and draft the text that would eventually bear the title *The Fair God*. Despite his desire to please his father and employer, Wallace did not quite manage to escape the poor reputation he had already

earned for his "boyish 'outlawry'" (Morsebergers 40). Certainly, his "outlaw" image was partly a result of his love for romantic novels and his desire to write one of his own.

After the Civil War, Wallace returned to Indiana a respected man, if not exactly a hero. However, the rebukes by Grant and Juárez, which were reported in newspapers, made him sensitive about his standing in the eyes of his neighbors. In this context, it is understandable that he would worry about, or at least ponder, the effects that authoring a romantic novel like the ones that were derided in his youth would have on his reputation. In fact, the notion that novel-writing was a juvenile or unmanly activity may explain the author's decision to frame *The Fair God* as the translation of a long-lost manuscript. On the one hand, casting himself as a translator, rather than an author, would have allowed him to present the text as a work of historiography—a companion to the *History* by Prescott, who was praised because his work was considered romantic history, rather than historical romance. On the other hand, it also inserted a convenient distance between the author and the events being described and thus granted him an ability to diminish his own involvement in the project. Repeatedly, in his *Autobiography* (1906) and letters, Wallace indicates that he plugged ahead on the novel for decades without any intention of seeking publication. However, this claim is difficult to reconcile with the fact that he attempted to publish a draft of the novel in 1853. I find it more likely that the author developed the Ixtlilxóchitl narrator—a character with whom the young Wallace may have identified for the reasons I discuss above, but who contributes very little to the narrative itself—with the hope that readers who resisted the novel genre would mistake the text for an authentic

sixteenth-century chronicle[23]. Offering further evidence of the author's reluctance to take credit for the novel is the "Note" that appears in the front matter, which indicates that he took the manuscript to Boston intending to publish it anonymously. The publisher, James R. Osgood, refused to honor this request, perhaps because he anticipated that having the name of the "Scapegoat of Shiloh" on the spine would help the book attract attention.

Wallace employs additional methods to defend his decision to become a novelist when he could serve—and in fact had served—the nation in a conventionally productive manner as a lawyer, soldier, statesman, and diplomat. Like Avellaneda, but *unlike* most other US Americans who authored Conquest novels in the nineteenth century, Wallace positions the figure of Cuauhtémoc, the last emperor of the Aztecs, at the center of the Conquest plot. Both authors depict their eponymous protagonist as a self-educating prince and a rare voice of reason and temperance among the generally superstitious Aztec rabble. Wallace, specifically, engineers his characterization of Guatamozin to serve as a reminder that "patient study" and an attention to the arts has social value. To an extent, his portrayal of Guatamozin is grounded in the Black Legend, as the prince's scholarly industry stands in contrast to the dreamy indolence of Spanish characters like Orteguilla, the hapless page. However, even more than this, Wallace credits Guatamozin with great erudition in order to argue the necessity for a man of action to also be a man of letters.

Avellaneda's and Wallace's suggestions that the last emperor was an attentive student suggests that he is a precursor not only to the pre-national intellectuals of Cuba of

[23] Wallace's habit of citing Prescott and other authorities who wrote after Ixtlilxóchitl's presumed death in the sixteenth century "somewhat detracts from the illusion that this is a translation," the Morsebergers note (225). However, since the novel is framed by a translation completed by a nineteenth-century US American who has discovered the document, the reader may be expected to take footnotes as "translator's notes."

the 1820s-1840s, but also to the US Hispanists of the same era. This characterization is justified on information reported by Díaz del Castillo in the *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*, a text that is cited in the footnotes of both novels. According to Díaz, Cuauhtémoc once ordered 78 Spanish prisoners of war to the sacrificial altar and sent "las cabezas de los caballos y caras que habían desollado, y pies y manos de nuestros soldados que habían sacrificiado" (the feet and hands, with the skin torn from the faces of the murdered Spaniards, and the heads of the dead horses[24]) to provinces with whom he hoped to establish alliances (362). Avellaneda presents the scene just as Díaz describes it and claims that Cuauhtémoc sent the dismembered body parts so that other native groups would have incontrovertible proof that the foreigners were neither immortal nor receiving protection from the gods (394). By depicting the Aztec emperor as a rational thinker who rejected the assumption that people born in Europe were superior to people born in the Americas, she strengthens her argument that he is a forerunner to the creole intellectuals whose insurgent activities she is defending. Her insistence that he is white, or at least whiter than his compatriots, helps her establish this allegorical identification.

Since Wallace lived in a republic that had already claimed its independence from Europe, he did not share Avellaneda's interest in defending intellectual labor against a repressive metropole. Rather, he uses Cuauhtémoc/Guatamozin's capacity for reasoning to defend the general use-value of a career in letters. Accordingly, he embellishes Díaz's account with original scenes set in a structure, a kind of private library, where the

[24] I borrow the English sentence from John Ingram Lockhart (100). Lockhart's translation of the *Historia verdadera* appeared in 1844, and it would have been one of the newest and most fashionable translations available to Wallace when he undertook his study of Conquest-related historiography in the mid 1840s.

Tacuban prince examines sacred texts and the corpses of Spanish soldiers. The reader first glimpses the room in Book 2, when Io', the young son of Emperor Montezuma, pays a visit to Guatamozin's palace outside the city of Iztapalapan. Though Wallace states that the palace reflects the "prevalent style" of Aztec architecture, the "study" he describes is a notable and anachronistic exception (103). In the author's words, the room

> was furnished with severe plainness. An arm-chair, if such it may be called, some rude tables and uncushioned benches, offered small encouragement to idleness.
>
> Sand, glittering like crushed crystal, covered the floor, and, instead of tapestry, the walls were hung with maps of the Empire, and provinces the most distant. Several piles of MSS.,—the books of the Aztecs,—with parchment and writing-materials, lay on a table; and half concealed amongst them was a harp, such as we have seen in the hands of the minstrels. (104-105)

Overall, this scene is consistent with the author's depiction of Guatamozin as a paragon of republican virtue[25]. The ungarnished furnishings indicate that he uses the room for the sole purpose of studying, and the tools and documents surrounding him all contribute to a noble, republican purpose—what Gould calls the project of "early national history-writing." As the critic explains in *Covenant and Republic*, cultural production in the early nineteenth-century United States was guided by the desire to originate works of history and literature that would legitimate the country's independence from the Old World and "instruc[t] readers in republican behavior" (10). Guatamozin is a sixteenth-century Aztec nobleman, and yet, when he is asked by young Io' why he wastes his time poring over

[25] As Anderson writes in *Imagined Communities* (1983/2006), nationality is a fairly modern concept that has its roots in the eighteenth century, well after Tenochtitlan had fallen into the hands of Spain. Of course, Guatamozin's republican spirit is only one of many anachronistic qualities with which he is imbued. He is also monotheistic, with a devotion to Quetzalcoatl that echoes the Mormon belief that Jesus Christ visited the great American indigenous societies before he died, and also monogamous.

maps and dusty tomes, he offers a response that would have pleased a nineteenth-century statesman (and perhaps Wallace's father, who was himself a public servant): "I aspire to be of those whose lives are void of selfishness, who live for others, for their country. Your father's servant, I would serve him understandingly; to do so, I must be wise; and I cannot be wise without patient study" (106). In short, the author portrays the contents of Guatamozin's library and the time he spends examining them as *useful*, even *imperative*, to national survival. He establishes a clear link between letters and civic responsibility.

Of the maps, manuscripts, and other items in Guatamozin's library, only the harp, which is the instrument played by Montezuma's minstrels, could be mistaken for a source of pleasure rather than intellectual advancement. In fact, the harp is rather like the novel: It generates a product that an audience is likely to consume in a moment of leisure, yet it is a device that requires labor and technique from the artist who would use it to entertain and educate his or her compatriots. By listing the harp among the other items in the prince's possession, the author is suggesting that even diversions have a use-value in the nation-state. Benedict Anderson, who credits the novel genre for transforming the residents of disjointed regions into the citizens of contiguous nations, would agree with him. But despite his efforts to fend off their criticism, Wallace's fellow Indianians did not. As he would later share with a young Booth Tarkington, being known as a novelist (no matter how successful) severely undermined his credibility as a lawyer.

> When I took a case into court for a jury trial, the opposing lawyer knew that all he had to do was mention my authorship and I was demolished. … As soon as the jury of farmers and village merchants heard the word 'novel' they uttered hearty guffaws… I may as well have appeared in court dressed as a circus clown. (qtd. in McKee 127)

Fortunately, demand for the author's novels and lectures would soon enable him to leave the courtroom altogether. By the 1890s, even the "farmers and village merchants" who laughed at the novel-writing lawyer probably owned copies of Wallace's second novel, *Ben-Hur*, which follows a Jewish charioteer who exchanges his bloodlust for the men who enslaved him for a faith in Jesus Christ. With sales propelled by churches who recommended it to parishioners, *Ben-Hur* became an international sensation, renewing interest in *The Fair God* and eventually supplanting *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) in copies sold. By the turn of the twentieth century, Wallace's career in law and public service—the ostensible goal of all the formal education he had suffered through as a youth—was subordinated nearly to the point of erasure by his popularity as a historical novelist.

Romancing the Conquest in the Postbellum Era

Wallace anticipated the ridicule his career in letters would elicit from Indianians like his competitors in the courtroom and the members of the under-educated poor and middle classes, the latter of whom did not have easy access to novels and were suspicious of the men who spent their time writing them[26]. However, he could not have foreseen the resistance his novels would face from fellow writers, including the critics who derided his first novel upon its release and even challenged the author's integrity. Of the many negative reviews he received in his career, the one that troubled Wallace most appeared

[26] The Morsebergers discuss rural Indianians' lack of access to books: "Though the Indiana State Library had been established in 1825, with a sum set aside from the sale of town lots in each new county, the implementation of the law took many years, and very few books were available to each town or county. By 1850, there were four bookstores in Indianapolis, but Indianapolis was then a day's travel from [Wallace's home in] Crawfordsville, and books were expensive. Though there were probably some private lending libraries, Wallace's own father probably had as good a selection of books as any of them" (221-222).

in the Franklin, Indiana, *Herald* a few weeks after *The Fair God*'s first printing. In addition to deploring the text's grandiose style and shallow characterization, the reviewer charged that Wallace borrowed scenes from Fosdick's 1851 novel *Malmiztic the Toltec* (Morsebergers 238)[27]. Wallace defended the text's originality in a letter printed in another periodical; however, this was merely the first battle in a protracted war between the author, who longed to be accepted into the literary firmament, and the critical vanguard, which denied him that honor even as his works broke sales records, were translated into multiple languages, and made him an international celebrity.

Wallace's biographers have excused the vitriol his texts elicited from reviewers as a result of the literary elite's shifting preferences. For one example, McKee writes:

> An important reason for the unfavorable trend [among US reviewers] was the current interest in "realism"—Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871), Howells' *A Chance Acquaintance* (1873), Mark Twain and Charles D. Warner's *Gilded Age* (1873). Why Wallace should eschew the throbbing drama of America—real war (which he knew so well), big business, railroads, cities, colleges, liberated women—for knighthood in Tenochtitlan, the realists could not understand or forgive. (126-127)

McKee is correct to note that the realists who dominated United States letters in the late nineteenth century favored novels that were set in recent eras and represented the painful social transformations that had been thrust upon US Americans in the postbellum era. As Phillip Barrish has argued, authors like Howells, Twain, and Hamlin Garland "defined their manly professional identities—and the nature of their own writing—in opposition to

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[27] According to Gould, nineteenth-century critics did not have a standard definition for *plagiarism*. For example, some critics dismissed historical novels as "plagiaries" because they hewed too closely to their sources, while other critics dismissed histories as "plagiaries" because they were poorly written. From these examples, one might conclude that the word was utilized to distinguish professional writers from amateurs. In the eyes of many critics, Wallace, who published his first novel at age 46, was certainly an amateur (12).

literary 'romance,' by which they meant not only domestic sentimentality, but also the sort of romantic historical novels initiated by Scott" (19). *The Fair God*, which salutes Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* in its subtitle and draws on the conventions associated with out-of-fashion European novelists like Scott, Dickens, and G.P.R. James, is exactly the kind of "romance" the early realists would have bloodied in their campaign to shift the preferences of the US reading public to their own "modern" style of novel-writing. Further inciting the wrath of the realists, *The Fair God* returned US literature to a place (Mexico) and time (the sixteenth century) that had been amply explored in works that had circulated prior to the Civil War, including Prescott's *History* and the Conquest novels of the 1840s-1850s. As such, the *Herald* reviewer's suggestion that Wallace drew material from *Malmiztic the Toltec* is more than just an accusation of theft; it is a calculated effort to characterize the new Conquest novel as an old-fashioned romantic trifle. In the eyes of the realists, romances like *Mohicans*, *Malmiztic*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had failed to unify the nation around republican principles and had nudged the United States close to its destruction in the Civil War. Accordingly, their criticism sought to separate Wallace's retrograde romanticism from the writings of realist authors like Twain and Howells. In doing so, they ignored that these postbellum authors shared certain beliefs and goals, irrespective of the conventions they utilized in their narratives.

Arguably, Wallace had no choice but to write a romantic novel. He was a product of an earlier era than Howells, Twain, and Garland, and he had been raised to admire the historical romancers who brought respectability to a genre (the novel) that had struggled to find a foothold with cultural elites. Moreover, as a young man he had found escape and

inspiration in narratives about the heroism of figures like Robin Hood, Natty Bumppo, and George Washington. As the Morsebergers write, the author undoubtedly "suffer[ed] from the misguided concept of knight-errantry that Twain later labeled 'The Walter Scott disease'" (23). Near the end of his life, the novelist would reflect on the romantic spirit that spurred him to join the Mexican-American War. In his *Autobiography*, he writes,

> [I]t will be difficult, I think, for persons not themselves filled ardently with a *spirit of adventure* to understand the passionate interest I took in the Texas business from the time of General Taylor's departure… Denial and qualification aside, I was hungry for war. Had I not been reading about it all my life? And had not all I had read about it wrought in me that battle was *the climax of the sublime and terrible*, and that without at least one experience of the kind no life could be perfect? (my emphasis; 103)

Ultimately, Wallace's first wartime experience was a crushing disappointment. For months, the First Regiment of Indiana Volunteers was held in reserve in southern Texas, where he watched the Midwestern soldiers that he had helped recruit suffer from poor sanitation and disease. Finally, the First Regiment received orders from General Zachary Taylor to join him in Monterrey, Mexico, but it had to turn back to Texas after being caught in a dust storm. Wallace mustered out of the army in June, 1847, thoroughly disillusioned with the war and Taylor, whom he considered unkempt and duplicitous. Perhaps because his service was so disheartening, the author was later able to admit that he had volunteered for the Mexican American War because he longed to claim for himself the kind of life that he had been reading about in romantic books.

Without question, Wallace was a lifelong romantic. Even as an officer in the Civil War, he found the time to read historical novels, and, in 1861, he sent a letter to his wife voicing his enduring appreciation for Scott and Dickens, the latter of whom had just

finished a reading tour through the United States. "I have been reading Dickens' *Great Expectations*. How like him it is! What sly humor, what droll characters, what perfection of the humble human nature! Next to Scott he is the Master." However, Wallace was not a lifelong believer in the annexation of foreign territories. Despite allowing his romantic imagination to carry him away to the war against Mexico, he was not blind to the anti-imperialist lessons that Prescott and the other Hispanists had attempted to convey in their accounts of Spanish and Spanish American history, which treated the rise and fall of the Spanish Empire as a cautionary tale that war-mongering US American statesmen should heed. In the *Autobiography*, just a few paragraphs prior to the passage I excerpted above, he expresses a tempered perspective on the annexation of Texas, one that bears the wisdom of many more years of public service. He allows that the war may have been an act of aggression on the part of the United States. However, he argues that it was nonetheless "justifiable" because it prevented the Republic of Texas from turning to Europe for help. "Which was preferable?" he asks. "Texas a state of the Union, or Texas a subject of a French protectorate?" (102). On the one hand, his words invoke the Monroe Doctrine and the fear that Europe will reclaim a role of prominence in the American hemisphere. On the other hand, they also reveal an understanding that the United States' territorial expansion must not go too far—that annexing foreign lands is only justifiable when it is done to prevent future intervention from one or another European empire.

In *The Fair God*, Wallace addresses the cycle of Empire in a scene set in the *cû* of Quetzalcoatl. Deep beneath the temple are caves and other apertures where the priest locates signs of the god's will and wisdom that he occasionally "interprets" for the court

of the Emperor Montezuma. On the walls of one chamber, he discovers what appears to be a pictorial history of the Aztec Empire that ends, abruptly, with "the representation of a man landing from a canoe" (37). Mualox identifies the "man" as Quetzalcoatl, come to claim his vengeance on the people that exiled him, and his prophecy appears to be realized the following day, when reports reach Tenochtitlan that vessels bearing white foreigners have come ashore. The priest believes the pictures foretell the end of the Aztec Empire, and when he shares this interpretation with the emperor, the latter falls into a state of fatalistic despondency. The reader who is familiar with the work of the early US Hispanists understands that the drawings on the cave's walls record a history of Empire that is not specific to one national group[28]. The Aztecs have subjugated other nations, turned foreign lands into colonies, and in the process reduced their own capital to a weak, corrupt, and decadent metropole. According to the Black Legend and the Hispanists who promoted it in their writings, the same process has befallen Spain between the time of the Conquest and the early nineteenth century, when subjugated regions like New Spain successfully broke away from the empire, diminishing Spain's reputation and leaving it strapped for money and other resources. The question that Wallace, like the Hispanists before him, seems to be asking is, can the United States break the circle?

As I have argued in this chapter, Wallace supported US expansionism when it was carried out in the field of intellectual study. Following the lead of the earlier Hispanists, he believed that Spanish imperialism held important lessons for US Americans, and that

[28] In the novel, Wallace consistently refers to the various indigenous groups inhabiting North America at the time of the Conquest as "nations." Since *nationality* as a concept has its roots in the eighteenth century, this is an anachronism and reflects another way Conquest novelists shaped history to suit their own eras,

the best way to reveal these lessons was to exhume and appropriate the history of Spain's interactions with the indigenous people of Mexico. But he was less comfortable with the idea of territorial annexation, which he denounces in multiple writings. In the "Mexico and the Mexicans" speech, for example, he states that he would support the annexation of areas like the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico if doing so would prevent Europe from developing it for its own purposes. Nonetheless, he declares, "I am against annexation" (35). It is true that this opinion represents a break from the author's enthusiastic support for the Mexican American War. However, by the time he completed *The Fair God*, he had witnessed first-hand the horrors of the Civil War, an event historians agree was caused, at least in part, by the political and regional tensions that surfaced in the United States after the annexation of thousands of miles of Mexican territory. Among other things, the addition of Texas, California, and the other lands north of the Rio Grande River put a strain on the delicate balance of states that allowed and forbade the ownership of slaves. As a result of his service in the Civil War, where he saw men like Grant and Robert E. Lee, who once were colleagues, pitted against one another, Wallace might have read the Hispanists' warnings against imperialism with greater care. Though he continued to express his own opposition to annexation in a romantic register that left him vulnerable to realist critiques, he also revealed an understanding that romances, when consumed by naïve youths like the page Orteguilla, could foster negative behaviors—thus the book's averse depiction of the conquistadors and its suggestion that the hunger for foreign lands inevitably leads all empires to crumble, crushed by the weight of tyranny and rebellion.

Like the realists, Wallace shared the conviction that literature could suture the wounds that had been inflicted upon the United States by the Civil War. Specifically, he believed that literature could define parameters for imperial expansion that would prevent the nation from repeating the errors that had intensified internal divisions and led US Americans to war against one another. In this respect, *The Fair God* stands alongside the texts that Nina Silber and John Morán González, among others, have examined in their studies of the "romance of reunion." This phrase refers to a subgenre of the novel that emerged in the 1870s and imagined romantic unions between northerners (usually men) and southerners (usually women). Together, these texts argued that the time had come for the nation to abandon the enmities that had caused the Civil War and reunite behind the common mission of domesticating other parts of the continent[29]. *The Fair God* deviates from the standard definition of the romance of reunion, as it does not develop a love or even a friendship[30] between characters that predicts an eventual reconciliation of northern and southern US Americans. Nonetheless, like the texts explored by Silber and González, the novel invites the reader to dial the clock back to the years before the war, when cooperation between the North and South had empowered the nation to overthrow British colonialism, explore the West, and liberate the citizens of Texas. The Mexican-American War, in particular, offered a vivid portrait of northern-southern unity, as it had been led

[29] As González notes, the lovers depicted in these stories are nearly always white. As such, they reflect the state's decision to foster a reunion of northerners and southerners under the banner of white supremacy. The freedmen whose advancement had been promoted by the Reconstruction were sacrified to this process.

[30] In contrast to the "foundational fictions" of Spanish America, which Sommer examines in her book of that same name, pro-expansionist novels in the United States sometimes used homosocial relationships to allegorize cross-racial reconciliations. *Huck Finn*, which centers on a friendship between a white boy and a black man, is exemplary in this respect. As González writes, racism was too institutionalized in the United States for authors to see cross-racial *love* as a plausible or even desirable outcome (10-12).

by officers who would later fight on opposite sides of the Civil War, including the above-mentioned Generals Grant and Lee[31]. Significantly, González's book, *The Troubled Union: Expansionist Imperatives in Post-Reconstruction American Novels* (2010), discusses authors that have been canonized as realists (Twain and Henry James) and romantics (Helen Hunt Jackson and María Amparo Ruíz de Burton), thus blurring the lines that generations of literary scholars—the descendants of Howells and Twain—have drawn between realism and romanticism. As such, the study confirms that the desire to reunify the nation was not the exclusive province of one or the other narrative approach.

McKee suggests, in the lines I excerpted above, that critics might have greeted Wallace's entry into the field of letters with more enthusiasm had the author ignored his impulse to pen a novel about "knighthood in Tenochtitlan" and instead composed one about "real war (which he knew so well)." In fact, the realists may not have been willing to accept Wallace as one of their own irrespective of the themes, settings, and precursors he invoked. As McKee writes, "Wallace's career as a soldier, lawyer, and politician stamped him as an amateur in literature" (173). Moreover, the realists desired to distance US American literature from the Civil War, and the authors upholding this cause would have seen any work by a former Union General as an impediment to their mission.

Wallace recognized that he was unpopular with this younger generation of writers but could not fathom the cause. In 1873, while visiting Boston to review proofsheets, he made the acquaintance of Howells, who was in his second year as editor of the *Atlantic*

[31] Some of the officers who occupied Mexico City in 1847 referred to themselves as the "Aztec Club." In the 1880s, Grant and other northerners revived the club in an effort to reunite military leaders around the memory of their camaraderie in Mexico. In a speech delivered to this group in January, 1880, Robert Patterson called the Mexican-American War the "second conquest of Mexico" (Lint Sagarena 23).

Monthly. Wallace was impressed by the 36-year-old Ohioan and shared, in a letter to his friend and fellow romancer Maurice Thompson, that the two men formed a bond over their common Midwestern roots (Morsebergers 240). However, in the 1880s, after *Ben-Hur* made him a household name, he noticed that Howells and other prominent members of the Boston literati declined all invitations to receptions given in his honor. On one occasion, he lamented, "Why did they not come?… Would their presence have been too much of a sanction or endorsement for the wild westerner?" (qtd. in McKee 227). McKee remarks that the Boston literati's dismissal of Wallace's success as a novelist was "the sharpest blow" the author had been dealt since Shiloh (227).

Conclusion

The Fair God appeared between two waves of US American Conquest novels. The first wave, which includes texts completed in the 1840s and 1850s, was inspired by the loosening of restrictions on Mexico's viceregal archives and archaeological sites and the concurrent works by US Hispanists, especially Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*. The second wave, which includes texts completed in the 1890s and 1900s, narrates the same series of events, but is more overt in its praise for white supremacy and its support for imperial expansion into lands formerly occupied by Spain. While earlier novelists like Bird developed Aztec characters with whom the US American reader could identify on account of their mutual distrust for Europe, the Conquest novels of the 1890s and beyond encouraged the reader to identify with the conquistadors. Munroe's *The White Conquerors* is emblematic in this respect. Though the author praises both groups

for their "heroic fortitude, bravery, and persistence," he establishes Cortés as the event's rightful hero (323). The novel's conclusion, for instance, is steeped in adulation for the leader of the "white conquerors": "The fall of Tenochtitlan occurred in August, 1521, and for seven years longer did Cortes remain in Mexico, founding new cities, rebuilding many of those that had been destroyed, and in all ways perfecting his glorious conquest" (325). Of course, the latter wave of novels was written to reflect a new era in US foreign policy. In the 1890s, US Americans debated whether or not the nation should help Europe construct canals across the Isthmi of Tehuantepec and Panama that would facilitate trade between Europe and Asia. In 1898, the nation waged a war against Spain for control over the Caribbean. Eventually, in 1904, Theodore Roosevelt amended the Monroe Doctrine to claim the US's right to "intervene in intra-American conflicts in South and Central America in order to maintain economic stability and democracy" (Murphy, *Hemispheric* 6). In the eighty years since Monroe voiced his fear that Europe would re-conquer the Americas, the United States had become the hemisphere's dominant imperial presence.

Wallace vehemently opposed the nation's efforts to annex and develop regions of Spanish America and the Caribbean. Collected in his papers at the Indiana Historical Society is a speech, drafted circa 1899 and probably never delivered, in which the author surveys the nation's present imperial engagements with remarkable disdain.

> President [McKinley] wants to convert the Philippines and Puerto Rico, and govern them personally, and, though [the Republican senators] all know as well as the President that there is no grant of power in the Constitution to establish a colonial system, they are determined to help him to his wish…. [E]ver since General Grant's day presidents have had itching palms for Santo Domingo; and [senators] ought to know, if they do not, that the expansion fever is in the blood of the present Executive,

> making it reasonably sure that there will be no stop in the business, until, if only to round out and increase the splendor of the American colonial system now in incipiency, the whole of the West Indies are ours, including Jamaica and the Bermudas. Where we cannot conquer, we can buy. (1-3)

The speech is incomplete and the handwriting occasionally illegible—the latter possibly a sign of hasty composition or the author's advanced age. Nonetheless, it clearly expresses Wallace's contempt for a younger generation of politicians who, in their lust for power and wealth, were willfully committing the same errors that had led the Aztec and Spanish Empires to their demise and the United States to the Civil War. However, the speech does not reveal any recognition of the role *The Fair God* may have played in spreading the "expansion fever" the author diagnoses in McKinley and the legislators supporting him. Like the early Hispanists, Wallace had crafted a text that annexed Spanish American history in order to reveal the consequences of annexing Spanish American territory. Unsurprisingly, this nuanced and paradoxical lesson was lost on readers, just as Prescott's cautions about imperialism had been lost on Wallace nearly sixty years before. In the end, *The Fair God* was more than just the most commercially successful of the United States' Conquest novels. As an intermediary between the first and second waves of Conquest novels and almost certainly an unacknowledged model for the adamantly pro-imperialist novels of Janvier, Munroe, and others, it demonstrates how the Conquest narrative could simultaneously critique and encourage the drive for territorial expansion.

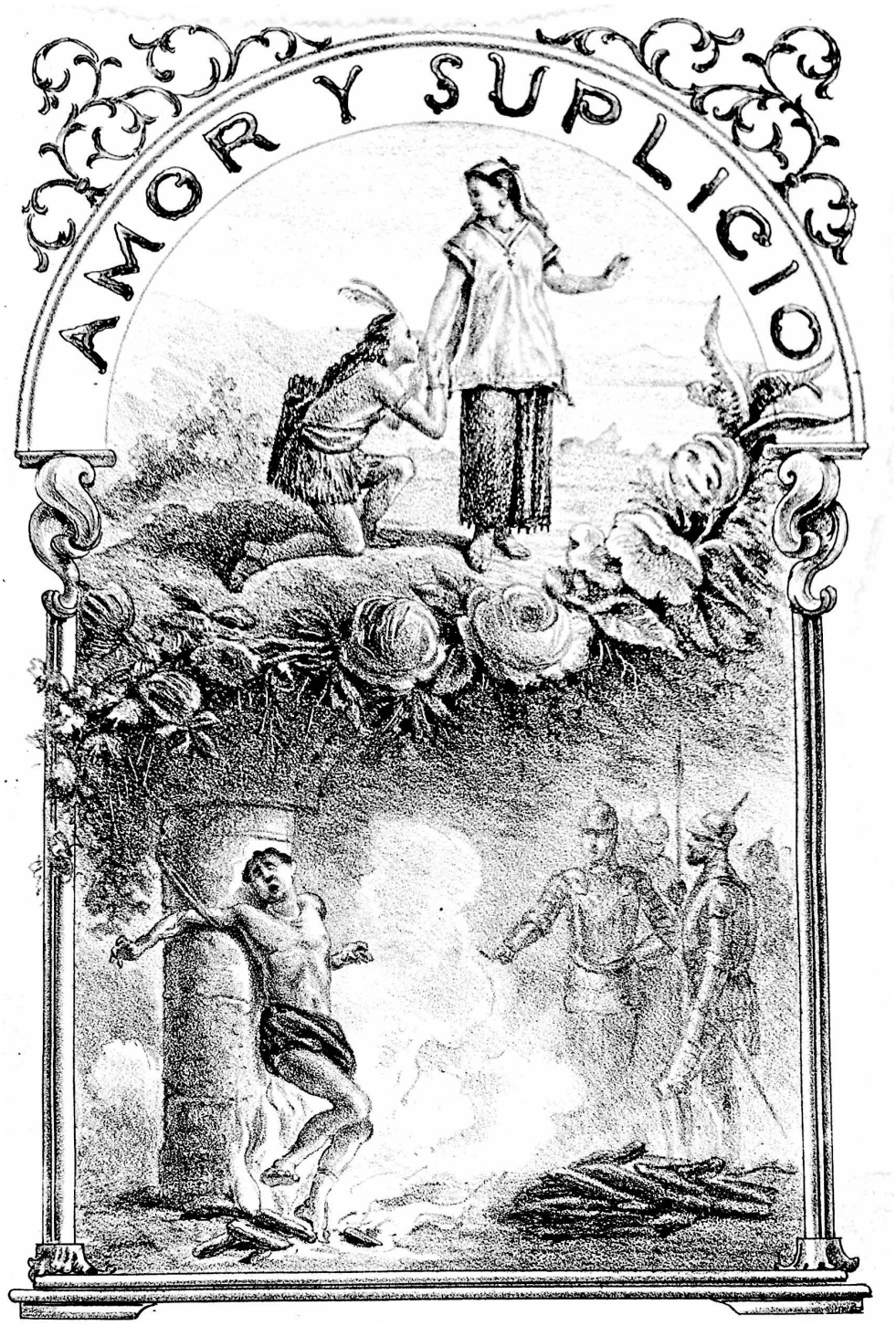

Figure 1: Guatimozin finds his “love” and “torment” on the novel’s name plate.

Chapter 3: Imagining Political and Racial Reconciliation in Postintervention Mexico: *Amor y suplicio* (1873) by Ireneo Paz

> [T]enemos una palabra de perdón y de olvido para los españoles de hace tres siglos que vinieron á martirizar á nuestros abuelos, ¿cómo no la hemos de tener de fraternidad para los republicanos de ahora que nos instruye en sus obras, que nos electrizan con su palabra y que se colocan á la cabeza de la civilización europea?
>
> (We forgive and forget the Spaniards of three centuries ago who came to martyrize our grandfathers. How could we not have come to feel a fraternity with those republicans who now instruct us in their works, who electrify us with their words, and who stand at the head of European civilization?)
>
> Paz, *Amor y suplicio* (1: 214-215)[1]

The Rise of the Mexican Conquest Novel

Creoles living in the regions of North America that would eventually comprise the Republic of Mexico have long been interested in the history of the Conquest. For some, like the seventeenth-century polymath Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, the grandeur of the Aztecs offered a rebuke to the Spanish caste system, which viewed Spaniards born in the Americas as inherently inferior to Spaniards born in Europe (peninsulars) and thus prohibited them from holding positions of influence in the colonial government[2]. For others, like the nineteenth-century poet Ignacio Rodríguez Galván, the brutality the

[1] Throughout this chapter, I reprint Paz's words exactly as they appear in the original texts. In some cases, his spelling and punctuation deviate from present orthographic standards.

[2] The prohibition has its roots in the belief that creoles were less holy than peninsulars because they were born farther from the Vatican (God's home on earth). For more on the resentment this limitation on social mobility engendered in New Spanish creoles, see Read's *The Mexican Historical Novel, 1826-1910* (1937), pp. 28-42, and Merrim's *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture* (2010).

conquistadors inflicted upon indigenous Americans in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries justified the wars of sovereignty that tore the Spanish Empire apart in the 1810s and 1820s[3]. However, despite New Spanish/Mexican creoles' perennial interest in the historical and allegorical dimensions of the Conquest, the event did not inspire local authors to compose original works of historical fiction until the early 1870s, in the years following the War of the French Intervention (1862-1867) and the republican army's defeat of the Second Mexican Empire (1864-1867).

There are various reasons for the late appearance of the Conquest novel in Mexico relative to the other parts of the New World that I have discussed in previous chapters. Perhaps most importantly, literary Mexicans living through the tumultuous early national era tended to see journalism, rather than novel-writing, as the easiest and most effective way to participate in the heated political debates that characterized the country's first fifty years of independence[4]. Moreover, as Earle writes in *The Return of the Native*, the creoles who claimed the right to direct Mexico's social and political future typically held the area's indigenous history at an arm's length. Positioning themselves as the rightful heirs to a region rich in cultural and environmental resources, they strongly believed that

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[3] In the poem "Profecía de Guatimoc" (Cuauhtémoc's prophecy; 1839), Rodríguez Galván warns that Spain must pay for its violent subjugation of indigenous communities: "El que del infeliz el llanto vierte, / Amargo llanto verterá angustadio; / El que huella al endeble, será hollado, / El que la muerte da, recibe muerte" (He who draws the tears of grief from unhappy eyes / Will weep the bitter tears of anguish; / He who tramples on the helpless shall be trampled. He who kills wantonly shall reap the harvest of death; qtd. in Read 60; translation provided by Read).

[4] Confirming this point, Read writes, "From 1800 to 1850 there were published not more than thirteen Mexican compositions that can be included in a very loose classification of the novel" (80). With the exception of *Jicoténcal*, which the critic acknowledges may or may not have been written by a Mexican author, none of these thirteen novels addresses the Conquest of Mexico. I want to note, also, that Mexican authors' initial lack of enthusiasm for the novel is a reflection of the persistence of the Inquistition mindset: Under colonial rule, Mexican presses were not permitted to print "trifling" texts like novels and romances.

Mexico was on the cusp of claiming its rightful place alongside France and the United States as a beacon of nineteenth-century modernity (84-85). Acknowledging any kind of continuity with the indigenous communities that had occupied the area in the pre-colonial period—particularly the Aztecs, who were notorious throughout the Western world for practicing the barbaric rite of human sacrifice—would only hinder their attempts to proliferate an image of sovereign Mexico as enlightened and unquestionably modern.

Setting aside the anonymously-authored *Jicoténcal* (1826), which readers have attributed to a Mexican writer but is more likely the work of a Cuban refugee, the first Mexican Conquest novels were Eligio Ancona's *Los mártires del Anáhuac* (The martyrs of Anahuac; 1870) and Ireneo Paz's *Amor y suplicio* (Love and torment), which both appeared in the early 1870s. *Los mártires del Anáhuac* is the better remembered of the two novels and is often interpreted as a critique of imperialism and tyranny, much like *Jicoténcal* and Avellaneda's *Guatimozín*[5]. Paz, like Ancona, was a staunch nationalist, and he spent many of the years preceding the publication of *Amor y suplicio* battling against the French army and the imperial court of Maximilian I on the war-field and on the pages of satirical newspapers. However, as I explain in this chapter, the novel represents something of a shift in focus and tone from these other Conquest novels as well as from Paz's earlier journalistic writings. Instead of invoking the clash between the Aztec Empire and the European interlopers to distinguish the New and Old Worlds from one another, the text reveals the desires the men and women who witnessed the Conquest

[5] According to Meléndez, *Los mártires del Anáhuac* offers a more authentic portrait of indigenous life than that which appears in other late nineteenth-century Conquest novels by Mexican authors. She seems to believe that Ancona's attention to the practices and worldview of the Aztecs is what makes the novel "anti-española" (anti-Spanish). See *La novela indianista en Hispanoamérica (1832-1889)*, pp. 91-93.

from either side of the conflict. Moreover, it highlights the importance of overcoming differences in race and creed in order for Mexico to fulfill its potential and enter into modernity. Rather than a critique of Europe, *Amor y suplicio* is a call for unity.

As its title suggests, the novel is divided into two parts. The majority of the first part, "Amor," is set in the city of Tlaxcala and focuses on the love three men representing different sources of Mexico's cultural heritage share for the chieftain's daughter. In setting this first half of the novel in Tlaxcala, rather than Tenochtitlan, Paz is perhaps revealing the influence of *Jicoténcal*, which was popular with Mexican liberals during his childhood (Leal and Cortina xvii)[6]. Like the 1826 novel, *Amor y suplicio* stages numerous scenes in the Tlaxcalan senate, where educated statesmen "dictaba[n] sus leyes á la república y […] discutia[n] los asuntos públicos de más importancia" (would dictate the republic's laws and […] discuss public matters of the greatest importance; 34). As such, the novel imbues the city with symbolic importance as a place where republicanism flourished before the American mainland was conquered by the despotic Spanish Empire. However, the two texts break paths in their characterization of the warrior Jicoténcal/ Xicotencatl himself. In the older novel, he is cast in an admiring light as a hero unflinching in his commitments to his wife and *patria*. Conversely, in the Paz novel, he is an unmarried and petulant youth. Of the three heroes who try to win Otila's hand in marriage, Xicotencatl is the easiest for her to refuse. This is not only because his demeanor is often unpleasant, but also because this narrative about achieving Mexican

[6] Even if Paz was not familiar with the 1826 novel, he may have encountered one of various plays based on the novel that were being staged in the country as early as 1828. See Leal and Cortina.

national unity in the face of political and racial differences requires that Otila look beyond her own people for a husband and a potential father to her children.

The first suitor that Otila accepts as an appealing mate is Guatimozin, the prince of the Aztecs. History records that the Tlaxcalans and Aztecs had long been enemies, and according to Paz this is because they embraced irreconcilable approaches to government. Whereas Tlaxcala (in Paz's account) was a republic where policy was politely debated by senators, the Aztec Empire was a monarchy ruled by a decadent tyrant who tolerated no challenge to his authority. Like Xicotencatl, Guatimozin is a celebrated warrior, and when Otila agrees to marry him she looks forward to forming a union that will help their countries put the ancient rivalry to bed. However, before Guatimozin is able to claim Otila's hand in marriage the senate enters into an alliance with Hernán Cortés, who is on his way to plunder the fabled treasure chests of Moctezuma. While the conquistadors are enjoying a respite in Tlaxcala, Otila falls in love with the white Spanish soldier Don Juan Velázquez de León, the son of Diego Velázquez de León, the Governor of Cuba. Breaking her engagement to Guatimozin, she weds Velázquez a matter of hours before the two lovers depart for Tenochtitlan. As one condition of their marriage, Otila accepts the Christian God and takes a new, Christian name—Doña Elvira.

In the novel's second part, "Suplicio," Paz subordinates the romantic plot that had dominated the first half of the book to a more conventional chronology of the Conquest that includes many of the episodes that are rendered in *Guatimozín*, Wallace's *The Fair God*, and similar novels. Of course, the "torment" referenced in the title belongs to the unfortunate Guatimozin, who must grapple with the betrayal of Otila/Doña Elvira and

who suffers brutal tortures at the hands of Cortés's soldiers because he is unable to reveal the location of Moctezuma's vaults. (One of these tortures, having his feet burned, is illustrated on the book's name plate, which I have reprinted as Figure 1.) As the narrative wends toward its inevitable *denouement*, the capture of Tenochtitlan and the execution of Guatimozin, Paz excerpts with surprising frequency passages from canonical works of Conquest historiography like *La verdadera historia de la conquista de Nueva España* by the conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo, whom Paz praises as "el escritor más sincero de su tiempo" (the most sincere writer of his time; 2: 502). According to Concha Meléndez, who discusses *Amor y suplicio* in *La novela indianista en Hispanoamérica (1832-1889)* (The *indianista* novel in Spanish America [1832-1889]; 1934), Paz transcribes long passages from historiographical documents "cuando quiere acentuar su afirmación de que escribe 'con la historia en la mano'" (when he wants to accentuate his claim that he writes "with a history book in one hand"; 93)[7]. Perhaps it is true, as Meléndez seems to be suggesting, that Paz incorporates these excerpts to demonstrate the extent of his research and his credibility as a historical novelist. However, their inclusion seems consistent with the project Paz is undertaking throughout the novel to encourage readers to abandon old rivalries and strive for a modern cultural synthesis. If, in the first section of the novel, he fashions a romance between one woman and three men that encourages readers to move beyond their differences in politics, then in the second half of the book, which concludes with Guatimozin and Cortés wrapping their arms around one another in a remarkable act of interracial fraternity, the author is arguing that Mexicans

[7] The Paz quote is embedded in the defense of modern Spain that I discuss toward the end of this chapter.

should also bury the hatchet against Spain, which has made amends for its crimes against Indians and creoles. In Paz's view, Spain has contributed enormously to the character and bloodline of Mexico and could become a valuable ally in the present moment.

Creoles in Crisis: Paz's Republican Formation

When the Viceroyalty of New Spain withdrew from the Spanish Empire in 1821, taking with it several additional territories including the Kingdom of New Galicia, most of present-day Central America, and a wide stretch of land north of the Rio Grande River, the creoles who inhabited these areas predicted that the newly formed country of Mexico was looking forward to a bright future[8]. Like the Spanish peninsulars who had controlled the viceregal courts, these creoles embraced a racial hierarchy that placed them in charge of deciding the path the region would now take toward *modernity*, a destination many of them did not distinguish from *republicanism* as it was being practiced in "progressive" nations like France and the United States. As in many parts of the New World, in Mexico creoles were vastly outnumbered by Indians and mestizos; however, they believed the imbalance was temporary: Darker-skinned Mexicans would continue to have children with lighter-skinned Mexicans, bringing all the country's inhabitants closer to the white ideal[9]. Furthermore, as Mexico prospered, it would draw in some of the immigrants from "white" countries like Ireland and Germany that were currently pouring into the United

[8] Merrim traces the pride New Spanish/Mexican creoles took in the richness and diversity of the American mainland to the seventeenth century. In a sense, the texts by Bernardo de Balbuena, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and others that Merrim discusses document the emergence of a kind of creole identity that would eventually evolve into a push for political independence.

[9] According to Krauze, creoles only comprised about 10% of the nation's population in the mid 1850s, though of course they still exerted a much larger influence on national politics (*Mexico*).

States (Scholes 13). Free of the religious restrictions and other disenfranchisements that had characterized three centuries of authoritarian rule, creoles like José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and Servando Teresa de Mier had little doubt that Mexico would soon claim its rightful place among the world's most prosperous communities.

Paz, who was born in 1836, was too young to have experienced first-hand the creole optimism that had characterized the first several years of Mexican independence. Rather, as a child and young man he witnessed one assault after another on Mexican sovereignty and republicanism. Since its birth the country had suffered from in-fighting between political factions that refused to compromise with one another. The first wave of national politicians shared many of the same goals, including curbing corruption in the central government, liquidating foreign debt, increasing agricultural production and mineral extraction, and defending the northern territories against attacks from Indian groups. However, as Walter V. Scholes explains in *Mexican Politics during the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872* (1957), they strongly disagreed about how to reach these objectives, with most creoles falling into one of two camps. On the one hand, the conservatives, or royalists, wanted to establish a monarchy. As they reasoned, eliminating political parties would increase the government's stability, and placing a king, perhaps a member of one of Europe's royal families, on a throne would bring Mexico international respect. On the other hand, the liberals, or republicans, wanted to establish a constitutional democracy where presidents were elected by the people (46)[10]. By the time Paz finished his

[10] I want to acknowledge that the conservative and liberal "parties" were not formed immediately after Mexico gained its independence but rather developed organically over the first decades of nationhood. The

schooling and earned his credentials as a lawyer, Mexico had suffered multiple civil wars, and creoles had not yet succeeded in transforming their rudimentary pride in their difference from Spanish peninsulars into the strong sense of national distinction that Benedict Anderson says is crucial to the survival of new nations.

Mexico also confronted external threats. The most formidable of these came from Spain, which tried to re-conquer the area several times before recognizing its sovereignty in 1836, and the United States, which succeeded in wresting away several thousands of miles north of the Rio Grande River at the end of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). A crushing blow, the loss of nearly half of the nation's land ended Antonio López de Santa Anna's tenth term as president and inaugurated what Rafael Rojas calls a new era in Spanish American republicanism. In the 1820s and 1830s, Spain's former colonies had displayed a desire to work together, with leaders like Simón Bolívar going so far as to suggest that they should organize a Pan-American confederacy that would formalize the individual governments' relations to one another[11]. However, Mexico's disastrous defeat in the war against the United States sent a shock through the New World. To the leaders of other Spanish American countries, Mexico, plagued by political strife and butted up against a republic of land-hungry English-speakers, had become a cautionary tale—a reminder that social and political tumult in a nation's center invited invasions and

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events that pushed Mexicans into one or the other group included the rise to power of Agustín de Iturbide, who was proclaimed president in 1821 and emperor in 1824; the development of the 1824 Constitution, which would remain the law of the land until 1857; and the ascension of Santa Anna.

[11] Bolívar envisioned a Latin American parliament comprised of "representantes de repúblicas, reinos e imperios" (representatives from republics, kingdoms, and empires; qtd. in Rojas 49). According to Rojas, Bolívar's wording here is important, as it reveals that he prioritized cooperation over consistent systems of governance. In theory, Mexico would have a seat at the table whether the royalists or republicans prevailed.

other calamities at its margins. In response, they shifted their focus from interacting with their neighbors to strengthening their borders and promoting national identities that were explicitly tied to the lands they occupied (Rojas 9, 33; Cortázar 175). To Mexicans, particularly liberals, the defeat was another sign that the nation was failing to realize its potential. According to the historian Enrique Krauze, the author of *Mexico: A Biography of Power* (1997), it coincided with a broader feeling of crisis that was coursing through Mexican creoles, who realized they were slowly but surely losing their edge in social and political influence to the nation's ever-expanding population of mestizos (152).

Raised in the southwestern city of Guadalajara, which had once been the capital of New Galicia, Paz was able to observe the struggles playing out in Mexico City from a comfortable distance. In *Ireneo Paz: Letra y espada liberal* (Ireneo Paz: Liberal pen and sword; 2002), biographer Napoleón Rodríguez portrays Guadalajara as one of the guiding lights of nineteenth-century Mexican liberalism. The city had been the home of Mexico's first insurgent journal, *El Despertador Americano* (The American Alarm Clock; edited by Francisco Severo Maldonado between 1810 and 1811), and the birthplace of many liberal politicians. Now the capital of the Mexican state of Jalisco, the city "fue semillero de notables personalidades liberales; su suelo, bastión importante en la defensa de la soberanía agredida" (Jalisco was a hotbed of notable liberal personalities, its soil an important bastion in the defense against assaults on [the nation's] sovereignty; 20).

Paz knew from a young age that he wanted to be a man of letters and reportedly founded his first newspaper at age fifteen. At twenty-one, he founded another with the aim of shoring up public support for the new constitution that liberals had put forward

with the desire to prevent the rise to national leadership of another incompetent *caudillo* (military leader or "strong man") like Santa Anna (Krauze, *Redeemers* 122). Known as the 1857 Constitution, the document guaranteed a number of rights that had gone unprotected in the nation's first 35 years of independence, including the right to free speech and the right to bear arms. Additionally, it outlawed all forms of cruel and unusual punishment, including the death penalty, which Santa Anna and other presidents had frequently utilized to silence their political opponents. To Paz, a young man eager to see Mexico step out of the shadows of authoritarianism and civil war that had been cast over it through three centuries of colonialism and more than thirty years of independence, the development of the new constitution seemed like a sign that the nation's leaders were finally putting the rights of citizens ahead of the ambitions of *caudillos* like Santa Anna and embracing a democratic form of government. However, since the constitution also rescinded many of the Catholic church's privileges and planned to raise revenue by auctioning off some of the lands currently owned by local churches, it was considered heretical by spiritual leaders and opposed by a majority of conservatives, who still wanted to establish a monarchy.

As Mexico descended into another civil war, this one known as the Reform War (1857-1860), the nation's moderate president, Ignacio Comonfort, stepped down, leaving the office to his second-in-command, the President of the Supreme Court, Benito Juárez. The first man of indigenous (Zapotec) heritage to serve as president, Juárez had been educated in a seminary and did not share the liberals' contempt for the Catholic church. In fact, while serving as Governor of Oaxaca and later President of Mexico, he tended to

"[give] his public position a religious aura, trying to stay close to the clergy and their legitimizing presence, invoking God and Providence, and diligently attending church ceremonies," as Krauze reports (*Mexico* 164-166). Nonetheless, he vowed to uphold the provisions of the 1857 Constitution and effectively rallied around him an army of liberals who supported constitutional reforms and local *caudillos* who valorized him as an honorable and tireless patriot. The war, as Krauze characterizes it, was an unpopular one to the extent that "[the] great mass of people neither approved of it nor enlisted in it" (170). Even so, it ravaged Mexico for two years and sharpened the division between republicans and royalists, who clung even more tightly to their respective positions. After the *Juaristas* defeated the conservative army in January of 1860, effectively bringing the war to its end, the animosity between liberal republicans and conservative royalists and church leaders continued to manifest in acts of vandalism and a series of retributive measures enacted by the triumphant liberals. Juárez's Secretary of Foreign Relations, Melchor Ocampo, expelled all but two of the Catholic bishops from the country and was himself assassinated by the agents of a conservative guerilla (Krauze, *Mexico* 171).

Juárez's rise to power occurred at a time when Mexican creoles, particularly the liberals exercising control over the central government, were re-evaluating the legacy of the area's indigenous communities. Since before independence, creoles had been dwarfed in number by Indians and mestizos. By employing the racist hierarchies that had been utilized throughout the colonial era in their favor, creoles had managed to maintain control over Mexico's politics for three decades. However, by the mid century, they recognized that their numbers were dwindling, a problem that liberals attributed to the

outsized role played by the Catholic church, which they believed discouraged white Europeans from predominantly Protestant countries like Germany from immigrating to Mexico. Moreover, they noted that while the nation's indigenous population continued to labor in serf-like conditions and live in circumstances of dire poverty, its mestizos were showing signs of incredible upward mobility, growing in number, becoming increasingly educated, and rising to positions of power in the state and central governments[12]. With a man of indigenous heritage ascending to the position of president and mestizos like Ocampo gaining national prominence for their efforts to defend the Constitution of 1857, liberals began to realize that the future of their cause depended heavily on reaching out to these historically marginalized groups and ensuring that they were brought into the republican fold. In the words of Sandra Messinger Cypess, the author of *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (1991), creole nationalists began sensing the need "not only to incorporate the Indian heritage into the definition of 'Mexican' but also to valorize positively that previously ignored and disdained element" (68). Paz's *Amor y suplicio* is one of many liberal-authored texts that undertook this kind of work.

Journalism of Opposition: *El Payaso* and *El Padre Cobos*

Paz took up arms when the Reform War reached his home state of Jalisco and led a band of local soldiers loyal to Juárez against the conservative army. According to Rodríguez, the author's participation in this clash between the proponents of liberalism and conservatism was not an isolated episode in his biography. Rather, it was the first of

[12] Juárez, who had become president "despite" his Zapotec origins, was the exception that proved this rule.

many fights that Paz would wage against tyranny and what he perceived as backwardness over the next twenty years. In his battles against conservative armies, the French Intervention, and eventually the reinstated administration of Juárez, he would be aided by not only his sword and pistol, but also his pen and printing press.

For much of the 1860s, the target of Paz's opposition was the French army, which occupied Mexico beginning in December, 1861, and the Second Mexican Empire, which France established with the support of Mexican conservatives (still sour from their loss in the Reform War) in 1864. Officially, France invaded Mexico in an attempt to force the Juárez administration to resume paying the nation's foreign debts[13]. However, as Krauze and other scholars have speculated, the French emperor, Napoleon III, and his cousin, the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian von Hapsburg (later Maximilian I of Mexico), might have used the matter of debt repayment as their pretense to stage an invasion they had been planning for several years (*Mexico* 172-176)[14]. At first, the War of the French Intervention played out far from Guadalajara. However, when the royalist army entered Jalisco, Paz joined the republican opposition. Like Wallace, he distinguished himself as a soldier, and he earned the title of General del Ejército Repúblicano (General of the Republican Army) from Domingo Rubí, the Governor of Sinaloa. However, unlike his

[13] In 1860, Juárez's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Juan de la Fuente, informed several European courts that Mexico was not planning to repay large sums of money that it borrowed from them before and during the Reform War. France, Spain, and Great Britain all sent armies to Mexico with the hope of intimidating the Juárez administration into continuing repayment. Only France refused to strike a compromise.

[14] As a young man, Maximilian traveled extensively through Europe, Africa, and Asia and even visited Brazil. In his memoirs, which he composed around age 25, he recalls visiting the royal tombs in Granada, which held the bodies of many of his Catholic ancestors, and thinking that it would be "a beautiful and divine dream for a nephew of the Spanish Hapsburgs to flourish the latter in order to conquer the former" (172). According to Krauze these words suggest that Maximilian was already envisioning himself the ruler of Spain or one of its former colonial possessions (*Mexico* 172).

US American contemporary, Paz did not see writing as a break or a distraction from his career on the battlefield. Rather, to borrow Rodríguez's words, he considered it a "labor combativa" (combative labor) that lent crucial support to the republican cause (43).

Occasionally captured by the French and royalist armies, Paz served a number of prison sentences, including at least one that was supposed to end in his execution, and he frequently (and falsely) promised the enemy that he would abandon the war and retire peacefully to Guadalajara. Far from quelling Paz's rebelliousness, these periods of imprisonment and amnesty presented him with the time and space to take his fight against the Second Empire to the pages of oppositional newspapers. Of the several anti-royalist papers that Paz edited during the War of the French Intervention, the one that gained the greatest notoriety was *El Payaso* (The Clown), which circulated throughout Jalisco and the neighboring states in 1865 and 1866. Billed as a "periódico bullicioso, satírico, sentimental, burlesco, demagogo y endemoniado, que ha de hablar por los codos" (boisterious, satirical, sentimental, burlesque, manipulative, demonic newspaper that has to talk your head off)[15], *El Payaso* offered a response to locally-authored pro-royalist periodicals like *El Tirabeque* (The Pea) and *El Tauro* (The Bull). Generally satirical in tone, it portrayed the Second Empire as a circus and the emperor as its eponymous clown. In fact, Paz held an ambivalent opinion of Maximilian. It was clear to him that the Austrian-born emperor, in contrast to the conservatives who supported him, was open to making the reforms that had been called for in the 1857 Constitution and that the Second Empire granted "una libertad más amplia a la prensa que ha tenido relativamente

[15] These words appear directly under the title in every issue of *El payaso*.

hablando en algunas de nuestras administraciones republicanas, particularmente en estados que están lejos del centro" (greater freedom to the press than it had enjoyed under some of our republican administrations, particularly in states located far from the capital; *Algunas campañas* 1: 128)[16]. Nonetheless, he was unflinching in his republican principles and could not embrace the idea of a Mexican monarch, particularly one who depended on the support of the Catholic church and the strength of a foreign army to retain his power.

Although Paz acknowledged that the Second Empire offered protections to the press, in the "Prospecto" (Prospectus) that opens the first issue of *El Payaso* he takes aim at the restrictions that it has placed on liberals' freedom of expression. The column is written in the form of a dialogue between the editor (Paz) and an imagined reader, with the former letting the latter know what to expect from the new paper. A few lines into the conversation, the author admits that *El Payaso* is likely to offend the "partido reinante" (royalist party). The statement is wryly ironic, as the declaration of the Second Empire had effectively abolished the liberal and conservative political parties, transforming all Mexicans into either royalists or traitors. Apparently surprised at this remark, the reader asks what party, or color, *El Payaso* embraces[17]. "¿Color?" (Color?), the speaker replies,

> -- Debe ser el amarillo, porque estamos pálidos de puro miedo.
> -- Pues no emprenderla y asunto concluido.
> -- Entonces ya no seriamos patriotas. Se ha proclamado la libertad del pensamiento; estamos llamados como miembros de una nacion libre á disentir, ya que no á dar nuestro voto, sobre las grandes cuestiones que se

[16] Maximilian also came to view members of Mexico's conservative coalition with scorn. As he wrote in a letter to José María Gutiérrez de Estrada, "The worst people I have found in this country…belong to one of three groups: the judiciary, the army officers and the majority of the clergy" (qtd. in Krauze, *Mexico*, 180).
[17] In the United States, political idealogies are often placed on a continuum between the liberal left and conservative right. In Mexico, they tend to be delineated with colors. For example, "pure" or "leftist" liberals are "red," while "moderate" or "centrist" liberals are "pink." See Krauze, *Mexico*, Chapter 8.

> ventilan y las discutiremos ¡voto al chápiro! porque así cumpliremos con nuestro deber de mejicanos.
>
> ("It should be yellow because we are pale from pure fright.
> "Well, let it be, and [accept it as] a concluded matter.
> "Then we would not be patriots. Freedom of thought has been proclaimed; we are said to live in a nation free to dissent, just not free to cast our vote in the large questions hanging in the air. So we say *vote for the devil!*[18] because that is how we will fulfill our duty as Mexicans.)

Up to this point, Paz had been mostly concerned with the dissolution of political parties, but here he condemns the monarchical system itself, which places the power to make important decisions in the hands of one man (or woman) who is not accountable to citizens because he (or she) will never face a popular election. As I have said, Paz had a certain respect for Maximilian, whose upbringing in post-revolutionary Europe made him sympathetic to the plight of Mexican liberals. However, in this moment, he seems to be recognizing that even a well-intentioned emperor cannot guarantee "freedom of thought" or enact any other liberal reform while he is the head of a government that stays in power by stripping citizens of their fundamental right to participate in the political process.

As he would recall in his memoirs, *Algunas campañas* (Some campaigns; 1884-1885), Paz decided to call the paper *El Payaso* because he wanted to perpetuate the image of Maximilian as a clown in the popular imagination. "El hombre más grande puede caer de un pedestal cuando llega a aplicársele propiamente una frase ridícula, como mató Victor Hugo a Luis Bonaparte llamándole 'Le petit Napoleón'" (The biggest man can fall from a pedestal when he becomes associated with a ridiculous phrase, the way Victor

[18] A common expression of frustration, *voto al chapiro* is not easily translated into English. I have seen the phrase translated as *what the hell*, but I have opted for *vote for the devil* to better suit the context.

Hugo killed Louis Bonaparte by calling him 'Le petit Napoleón'; qtd. in Rodríguez 44). However, even in this satirical paper, Paz sometimes abandoned his comic tone to make earnest affirmations of Mexican nationalism. For instance, in the issue observing the 45th anniversary of the independence of New Galicia, he summarizes the disillusionment felt by many of his contemporaries concerning the nation's apparent failure to hold onto the independence for which Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and so many others had so bravely fought[19]. Since its birth as a nation, Paz writes in the column, Mexico had faced one after another threat to its sovereignty from internal strife and foreign invasions, preventing the nation from enjoying even "un sólo momento de descanso" (a single moment of rest; "La independencia"; Independence 1). Now, the once-sovereign nation was being humiliated by a European army and a clown-like foreign emperor whose political ideology clearly did not reflect that of the priests and politicians supporting him. Paz insists that Mexican patriots would not accept the return to colonialism that the Second Empire implied: "Méjico supo una vez ser libre é independiente y lo será siempre ó se hundirá en la nada. Tales son las leyes inexorables del destino" (Mexico was once free and independent, and it must continue to be, or it was dissolve into nothing. These are the inexorable laws of destiny; 2). In this sentence, Paz bears out the historian Alejandro Cortázar's claim that for all the troubles the French occupation brought Mexico, it also encouraged liberals to promulgate a nationalist spirit that the region had previously been lacking. Developing

[19] As I explained in Chapter 2, Hidalgo did not lead his infamous 1811 uprising with the goal of pushing New Spain to declare sovereignty. Nonetheless, by the 1860s, nationalists were already vindicating the priest's "Grito de Dolores" (Cry of Dolores) speech as Mexico's declaration of independence.

this idea in *Reforma, novela, y nación: México en el siglo XIX* (Reform, novel, and nation: Mexico in the nineteenth century; 2006), Cortázar explains,

> contra el imperio de Maximiliano hubo de surgir el nacionalismo, la unión en defensa del territorio, y en este sentido como se dio la "homogeneidad" de forma simultánea como un "nosotros los mexicanos." La cuestión sería cómo lograr mantener este espíritu unificador (*espíritu del pueblo*) durante y despúes del largo conflicto bélico.
>
> (against the regime of Maximilian there had to be a rise in nationalism—unity in the defense of territory—and, in this regard, as "homogeneity" occurred so did "we the Mexicans." The question would be how to succeed in maintaining this unifying spirit [*spirit of the people*] during and after the long military conflict; italics in the original; 174)

To put it another way, the clashes that ensued as a result of the French intervention and the formation of the Second Mexican Empire turned the old conflict between liberals and conservatives, republicans and royalists, into a second war for Mexican independence. In the perspective of Paz, the nation would escape this most recent assault on its sovereignty by returning to the republican ideals that had guided the separatist leaders of the 1820s.

The War of the French Intervention ended in 1867, when Napoleon III recalled his army from Mexico, leaving the task of defending the Second Empire to Maximilian and a dwindling army of conservatives. Quickly defeating these proponents of royalism, Juárez reclaimed his position as president. However, while his reinstatement represented a win for republicanism, it also revealed the fractures in the coalition of liberals that had banded together for the duration of the war. According to Krauze, the turmoil that erupted in the late 1860s and early 1870s was the result of a generational divide within the ranks of Mexican liberals (*Redeemers* 123). Older liberals, on the one hand, continued to see Juárez as a champion of progress and were eager to return to the project of implementing

the reforms outlined in the 1857 Constitution. In their view, they had defeated not just the Second Empire, but royalism itself. Younger liberals, on the other hand, had come of age while fighting for Mexico's sovereignty against the French army and blamed Juárez for allowing the country to fall into bankruptcy in the first place. This younger generation of liberals also supported the tenets of the 1857 Constitution, but it believed that other men should be tasked with bringing the liberal reforms to fruition. The tensions between these liberal camps grew stronger over the summer and fall of 1867, as Juárez and Porfirio Díaz, a *caudillo* from Oaxaca who had helped the republicans achieve important victories against the Second Empire, faced one another in a heated presidential election[20]. In the months leading up to the election, Paz founded two new papers, *La Palanca de Occidente* (The Occidental Lever) and *El Diablillo Colorado* (The Little Red Devil), which both championed Díaz as the man better poised to lead Mexico to modernity.

Juárez's triumph in the election was decisive, but it did not placate the younger generation of liberals. After the election, Paz moved his family to the capital, where he became one of the administration's most outspoken opponents. In 1869, he founded a new satirical paper, *El Padre Cobos* (Father Cobos), which like *El Payaso* before it aimed to ridicule the hypocrisy and corruption of the men running the national government. The paper's title refers to a portly, short-sighted priest who appeared in cartoons and whose voice was sometimes invoked in the paper's more humorous columns. According to Rodríguez, the priest character was inspired by an old Spanish

[20] At this point, a full decade had passed since Juárez had ascended to the presidency, and critics argued that he was ineligible to run for another term. According to the 1857 Constitution, presidents could only serve two terms. However, since Juárez had become president as a result of his predecessor Comonfort's resignation, his supporters argued that was still eligible to run for a "second" term.

tradition of buffoonish clerics and might also have been a reference to Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, a Jesuit and a powerful member of Juárez's cabinet (52)[21]. However, as the paper matured, the rotund priest evolved from being a caricature of the regime to an emblem of the paper itself, which often congratulated itself for puncturing the Juárez administration the way Cobos has punctured the head of Lerdo de Tejada in the following cartoon:

Figure 2: Father Cobos examines the arrows he has shot into the head of Lerdo de Tejada.

Although Paz had campaigned against him in the 1867 election, *El Padre Cobos* did not typically criticize Juárez himself. For example, in the first issue, he remarks that the paper "es muy amigo de la actual administración, aunque no de su gabinete" (very

[21] After the defeat of the Second Empire, Lerdo de Tejada served simultaneously as the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of the Interior, a deputy in Congress, and the President of the Supreme Court.

friendly to the present administration, although not to its cabinet; "Los millones de la conducta"; 3). Remarks like this one suggest that Paz held Maximilian, whom he seems to have respected but ridiculed in *El Payaso*, and Juárez, whom he had supported in the Reform War and the War of the French Intervention but believed should retire, in similar esteem. It also anticipates the way that he would later defend the autocratic Díaz to his son and grandson as a good man with poor taste in advisors (O. Paz, "Silueta," 413).

In one of the relatively few instances in *El Padre Cobos* when Paz does address Juárez directly he condemns the president's unwillingness to surrender the office to a successor. Appearing on April 20, 1871, the piece takes the form of a sonnet:

> ¿Por qué si acaso fuiste tan patriota
> Estás comprando votos de á peseta?
> ¿Para qué admites esa inmunda treta
> De dar dinero al que en tu nombre vota?
>
> ¿No te conmueve, dí, la bancarota
> Ni el hambre que á tu pueblo tanto aprieta?
> Si no te enmiendas, yo sin ser profeta,
> Te digo que saldrás á la picota.
>
> Si, S. Benito, sigue ya otra ruta,
> No te muestres, amigo, tan pirata
> Mira que ya la gente no es bruta.
>
> Suéltanos por piedad, querido tata,
> Ya fueron catorce años de cicuta…
> ¡Suéltanos, presidente garrapata!
>
> (Why if, perhaps, you were so patriotic
> are you buying up votes with pesetas?
> Why do you permit this loathsome fraud,
> doling out money to whoever votes for you?
>
> Tell me, aren't you disturbed by our bankruptcy,
> by the hunger that squeezes your people so tightly?

If you don't mend your ways, though I am no prophet,
I am telling you that you will be set out in the stocks.

Yes, Saint Benito, now take some other path.
Don't show yourself, my friend, to be such a pirate.
Notice that the people are no longer so stupid.
Be merciful and set us free, beloved father.

It has already been fourteen years of hemlock.
Set us free, President Old Broken-Down Nag![22])

Published ahead of the 1871 presidential election, the poem highlights multiple reasons why younger, redder liberals thought that Juárez had abandoned the 1857 Constitution and was impeding Mexico's social and political progress. Among other criticisms, Paz accuses Juárez of buying votes to win a third term that was constitutionally denied to him and driving the nation into bankruptcy. The latter complaint was especially damning, as the inability to pay off debts had already made the country vulnerable to the imperial advances of one foreign empire. Moreover, the text employs a religious vocabulary to ridicule the president's public presentation as a patriot who served Mexico as humbly as he served God. As he is characterized by Paz, Juárez is either as corrupt as the bishops that his Secretary of the Interior had expelled in 1860 or a despot who would martyr his country to retain political power. For the author, either option was unacceptable.

Tlaxcala: The Great American Republic

Paz published his first novel, *La piedra de sacrificio* (The sacrificial stone; 1871), through the press of J.S. Ponce de León, who had recently taken over publishing *El Padre*

[22] The translation is the work of Hank Heifetz and Natasha Wimmer and appears in the English-language edition of Krauze's *Redeemers* (124-125).

Cobos[23]. However, he published his second novel, *Amor y suplicio*, like most of the other book-length works he would compose over the next five decades, himself, using the press he acquired around the time of Juárez's death in 1872. Since *Amor y suplicio* appeared two years after Ancona's *Los mártires del Anáhuac*, it has not been recognized by literary historians as the first Mexican novel to address the Conquest topic. However, the letter Paz reprints in the dedication indicates that he shared a draft with the liberal pedagogue José María Vigil prior to 1866. Moreover, scholar Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens suggests that he may have been working on it as early as 1854, when he brought several chapters of a historical novel to a literary society in Guadalajara where "los jóvenes amantes de las letras leían sus producciones" (young lovers of literature would read their compositions; 8). Whether either *Los mártires del Anáhuac* or *Amor y suplicio* truly deserves to be known as the first Mexican Conquest novel, the long stretch of time over which the latter was written suggests that it is especially well suited to reflect the evolving priorities of liberals between the Reform War and Juárez's death. Like *Jicoténcal* and Avellaneda's *Guatimozín*, the latter of which had been reprinted in Mexico in 1853, *Amor y suplicio* offers a strong critique of tyranny[24]. However, in recognition of the calamities the rift between republicans and royalists had wrought upon the Mexican people, the novel also lights a path toward ideological reconciliation through conversation and education.

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[23] The novel's title, which refers to the sacrificial altar used by the Aztecs, has led critics like Benítez Rojo to erroneously conclude that it is a novel about the Conquest ("The Nineteenth-Century Spanish American Novel"). In fact, Paz invokes the rite of human sacrifice to critique contemporary Mexican society.

[24] As I have mentioned, *Jicoténcal* and the plays it inspired were popular with Mexican liberals around the time of Paz's birth. Read, Cypess (*La Malinche*), and Ianes all argue that the Avellaneda novel made a lasting impact on how Mexicans like Ancona and Paz rendered the Conquest in their novels.

Paz's support for republicanism and liberal reforms comes through strongly in the contrast he strikes between the Aztec and Tlaxcalan nations[25], which had been rivals for many generations by the time Cortés reached the American mainland in 1519. The book's first chapter takes places in a forest outside Tenochtitlan, where a "cazador" (hunter) who is later identified as Guatimozin is stalking deer and ruminating on his love for Otila, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the Tlaxcalan chieftain (1: 18). The prince understands that the royal blood running through his veins entitles him to succeed his uncle, Moctezuma II, as the Emperor of the Aztecs. However, like Queen Isabel II of Spain, whom I discussed in Chapter 1, he does not seem to have thought critically about the monarchical system he was destined to oversee or to have been educated in alternate forms of governance. Suggesting that the young man should be excused for his complicity in a system that predates his birth, Paz interrupts the narrative with a blistering critique of the Aztec Empire that hangs its faults entirely on the shoulders of Moctezuma:

> [El] sistema de gobierno que se habia adoptado en esta nacion, era el monárquico, despótico, hereditario. Las crónicas refieren además, que ninguno de los reyes anteriores de los aztecas, habia sido tan tirano como este último emperador. El fué quien impuso á los pueblos exhorbitantes gabelas, al grado de que ya era imposible pagarlas; él fué quien se mandó fabricar los más soberbios alcázares con el producto de los impuestos; él fué quien introdujo un lujo fabuloso en el servicio real; él fué quien empezó á recrear su vanidad con todo cuanto la opulencia podia proporcionarle de más grato y halagador; y él fué, finalmente, quien mandaba sacrificar víctimas humanas, como ninguno de antecesores, para hacerse acepto á los ojos de las divinidades que adoraba.

[25] Since the concept of nationhood did not arise until the 1700s, I hesitate to call the civilizations of the Aztecs and Tlaxcalans *nations*. (*City-states* or *communities* are probably more accurate terms.) However, this is the term that Paz uses, probably to emphasize their correspondences to nineteenth-century Mexico.

> ([The] system of government that had been adopted by this nation was monarchical, despotic, hereditary. The chronicles state, moreover, that none of the previous Aztec kings had been as tyrannical as the present emperor. It was he who demanded tributes from the people that were so costly they were almost impossible to pay; it was he who ordered that magnificent palaces be built with the revenue raised from the tributes; it was he who introduced fabulous luxury into the royal service; it was he who began to recreate his opulent appearance, availing himself of every pleasing and flattering method; and, lastly, it was he who sent more human victims to be sacrified than any of his predecessors, in an effort to make himself acceptable to the divine beings that he adored; 1: 31-32.)

This condemnation of the emperor continues for several paragraphs. However, the lines I have reprinted highlight the essential point: Moctezuma is not only a corrupt leader; he is the most corrupt leader the Aztecs have ever known. One might argue that Paz casts the emperor in a similar light as he had cast Juárez in *El Padre Cobos*—as an incompetent leader who had impoverished his people and squandered public funds while veiling his greed for power in an elaborate display of religious devotion. However, Paz's Moctezuma is less an avatar of Juárez, who had already died by the time *Amor y suplicio* appeared in print, than the embodiment of the author's critique of the royalist ideology. In this capacity, the character reveals not a single redeeming quality—save, perhaps, for his affection for his nephew, whose life the emperor fears will not be happy. "¡Pobre Cuatimoc!" (Poor Cuatimoc!)[26] he laments at the end of the first chapter, as he ponders the possibility that his crimes will bring death and destruction to his entire bloodline. "[Su] porvenir está envuelto en sombras, los hados le son adversos" (Your future is covered in shadows; the Fates are your adversaries; 1: 25-26).

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[26] Paz typically refers to the book's protagonist as Guatimozin, employing a Hispanicized spelling similar to the one Avellaneda had used in her 1846 novel. However, in these words spoken by Moctezuma, he uses a spelling that better reflects how the name would have sounded in the original Nahuatl.

After exposing the "apocado" (weak-spirited) and "perverso" (perverse) nature of Moctezuma, Paz turns to distinguishing the Aztecs from their fiercest enemy and the only neighboring civilization they have not been able to subdue: Tlaxcala (1: 32). Historically speaking, the Mexica (Aztecs) and Tlaxcalans shared many similarities. Both groups of people migrated in the fourteenth century to the areas where Cortés encountered them in 1519, and both asserted their power by conquering the weaker communities surrounding them. By the time of the Conquest, both "empires" were comprised of semi-autonomous states—Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan in the case of the Aztecs, and Tepectipac, Ocuteluco, Tizatlán, and Quiahuixtlán in the case of the Tlaxcalans—whose leaders would travel to the capital to advocate for their regions and offer advice on matters of politics and economy. Like the author of *Jicoténcal*, however, Paz suppresses Tlaxcala's history of conquest and empire in order to reclaim it as a progenitor of *republicanism*—the Athens of the indigenous Americas. Emphasizing the role of the senate that Cortés addressed when he needed permission to pass through Tlaxcalan territory, Paz praises the nation as a place where statesmen debate policy using logic and stirring rhetoric. As portrayed in *Amor y suplicio*, the Tlaxcalan senate is a benign and responsible governing body that holds firm in its duty to enact "todas las medidas que juzgaba necesarias para la salud y la seguridad de la república" (all the measures it deemed necessary for the health and security of the republic), even in times of war (1: 34). It is a positive counterpoint to the corrupt Aztec court and a utopian vision for the nineteenth-century Mexican republic.

Before long, Guatimozin decides to return to the Tlaxcalan province where he had first laid eyes on Otila (during peace negotiations that occurred prior to the events that are

described in the novel)[27]. In an episode likely inspired by the masquerade ball in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595), the prince sneaks into a party being held at the home of Maxixcatzin and Otila. At first, the prince conceals his identity and is content to merely observe the maiden dancing. However, he reveals himself when he interrupts an intimate conversation between Otila and his most bitter rival, the warrior Xicotencatl. Recognizing that he is outnumbered, Guatimozin allows himself to be taken prisoner and put on trial in front of the senate. Xicotencatl, who is the aggrieved party in this trial[28], desires that the interloper be executed. However, Guatimozin points out that it is illegal to kill prisoners in times of peace, and he accepts the senate's decision to allow him to fight a duel against the agile Xicotencatl instead. Paz's immediate purpose here is to illustrate the expediency of the Tlaxcalan senate, which he is promoting as a positive model for nineteenth-century Mexico. However, Guatimozin's reference to the injunction against capital punishment in times of peace is also a swipe at Juárez, who had strayed from the 1857 Constitution when he allowed his supporters to put Maximilian to death after the fall of the Second Empire. In any case, Maxixcatzin leaves Guatimozin to prepare for the duel with the following caution: "Si vences, quedarás en libertad al instante para marchar á tu país; si eres vencido, se ofrecerá á los dioses en holocausto tu corázon palpitante" (If

[27] Earlier in the novel, Paz discusses Tlaxcala's intolerance toward the Aztecs who strayed into its borders: "mil veces los tlaxcaltecas transponian las murallas, sedientes siempres de venganza, en busca de mexicanos desprevenidos en quienes saciar su furor, y que se daban casos con frecuencia, de que se arrojaran de súbito sobre las familias ó las tribus enteras que encontraban, sin que se escapara jamás de la muerte ninguno de los que llegaban á caer en sus manos" (a thousand times the Tlaxcalans would peek over the walls [of the city], always thirsty for vengeance, in search for unaware Mexicans [Aztecs] upon whom they could satisfy their fury, and it was frequently the case that they would throw themselves down on whole families or parties, none of whom ever escaped death at their hands; 34).

[28] Because Guatimozin attacked him, but also because he wants to steal Xicotencatl's paramour from him.

you win, you will instantly be granted freedom to proceed to your country; but if you are defeated, your beating heart will become a burnt offering to the gods; 1: 125).

To the Tlaxcalans' dismay, Guatimozin soundly defeats their hero. (He knocks Xicotencatl unconscious.) However, he is wounded in the process and begs Maxixcatzin to allow him to remain and enjoy Otila's company for one additional night. Because he is the Tlaxcalan chieftain, Maxixcatzin leads a life of significant material comforts. He lives in a "hermoso palacio situado en el centro de la poblacion y rodeado de espaciosos jardines" (beautiful palace located in the town center and encircled by spacious gardens), and his daughter is attended by a legion of ladies in waiting (1: 59). However, Paz does not begrudge him these luxuries the way he begrudges Moctezuma's opulent temples and personal menagerie. In fact, the author depicts the Tlaxcalan chieftain as the antithesis of the Aztec Emperor—humble rather than boastful, tasteful rather than flamboyant, and more desirous of peace than the glory of conquest[29]. Maxixcatzin is initially unimpressed with Guatimozin's expressions of love for his daughter, whom he had expected to marry to the now-humiliated Xicotencatl. However, he enjoys the prince's company, and the two characters have several conversations about the rivalry between their *patrias* and the pros and cons of their respective governments. Even before he participates in the duel against Xicotencatl, Guatimozin admits that he had been wrong about the Tlaxcalans and that his uncle, Moctezuma, could learn much from Maxixcatzin. As the prince says to the leader of the civilization he had spent all of his twenty-five years of life despising,

[29] Paz's affirmative portrayal of Maxixcatzin marks a break from *Jicoténcal*. In the older novel, the chieftain is known as Magiscatzin, and he is depicted as the weak-spirited senator who shored up support for Cortés's proposals because he believed the conquistador would reward him with land and power.

"Desde hoy comienzo á respetar tu pueblo y á venerarte á tí como á mi padre" (From today, I shall respect your people and venerate you as if you were my father; 1: 101).

Before Guatimozin departs, Maxixcatzin gives his permission for the Aztec to marry his daughter—with the condition that he gain Moctezuma's assurance that the union will settle the feud between the two peoples[30]. Unsure that Guatimozin will be able to fulfill his end of the diplomatic bargain, Maxixcatzin reminds him that the lessons in republican governance that he has learned in Tlaxcala will prove useful whether or not he returns for Otila's hand in marriage. As the chieftain urges, "Si algun dia eres emperador, procura que se te ame y no que se tema. Gobierna con dulzura y dispondrás de un ponderoso imperio" (If some day you are emperor, ensure that you are loved, not feared. Govern with sweetness and unburden yourself with the weight of a heavy empire; 1: 174-175). Sure enough, by the time Guatimozin claims his place as emperor, Otila has already married another man and died in one of the conflicts ravaging the streets of Tenochtitlan. Nonetheless, he recalls Maxixcatzin's words and (unsuccessfully) attempts to rekindle the chieftain's interest in establishing an alliance between the two civilizations[31]. Largely as a result of the education he received during his wanderings in Tlaxcala, Guatimozin is able to make the transition from the naïve prince he had been at the beginning of the book to the virtuous proto-republican that late nineteenth-century Mexican nationalists would

[30] Cypess, in *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, discusses the scenes in which Maxixcatzin negotiates his daughter's betrothals to Guatimozin and Velázquez. Although Otila thinks she has the power to select her spouse, Paz's inclusion of these scenes suggests that her sense of self-control is a deception. In fact, her father repeatedly trades her to other men with whom he would like to establish an alliance (72-73).

[31] In a twist, the alliance is opposed vehemently by the aging Maxixcatzin, who, like his daughter, has converted to Christianity and accepted a new name: Don Lorenzo.

commemorate in a multitude of sculptures and other monuments[32]. As Paz concludes, "Si Guatimozin hubiera reinado en épocas ménos azorosas para su país, hubiera dado un gran impulso á la civilización del reino, hubiera logrado grandes cosas" (If Guatimozin had reigned in a less turbulent era for his country, he would have pushed the kingdom to become a better civilization; he would have achieved great things; 2: 446).

Amor y suplicio as a Foundational Fiction

As the "Amor" section of the novel ends, Paz turns his focus from Guatimozin's republican education to the blossoming interracial love of Otila, the "ángel morenillo" (little brown angel), and Don Juan Velázquez, the strapping white soldier (1: 249). In classic romantic fashion, the author portrays Velázquez's conquest of Otila's heart and soul as instantaneous and absolute. Within moments of laying eyes on the Spaniard's "cuerpo gallado" (gallant figure), she abandons her betrothal to the Aztec prince (1: 264):

> Otila ya no pensaba más en Guatimozin, ó si pensaba, ya no era con el ardor de ántes; el pobre príncipe mexicano aparecia en la mente de la jóven como esas leves sombras que se ven en un cuadro iluminado por la primera luz de la mañana.
>
> (Otila thought no more of Guatimozin, or if she did, it was not with the same ardor as before; the poor Mexican prince appeared in the girl's mind like those soft shadows that one sees on a wall illuminated by the first light of the morning; 1: 264).

Cypess, who analyzes the novel in *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, argues that Otila's attraction to Velázquez typifies the "Malinche paradigm" that haunts female characters in Mexican literature, who are depicted as traitors to their race and nation when they express

[32] For more on the monuments constructed in Cuauhtémoc's honor, see Earle, Chapter 4.

a preference for foreign mates[33]. However, by transferring Otila's love from Guatimozin to Velázquez, Paz is also signaling that he is authoring a foundational fiction like the ones Doris Sommer evaluates in her influential 1991 book. To be sure, Paz manipulates the sentimental elements of the text to tug at the reader's heartstrings. Not only does Otila break her prior engagement, leaving Xicotencatl as well as Guatimozin heartbroken and both of their peoples vulnerable to Cortés's manipulations. She also expires within weeks of marrying Velázquez, leaving no children and prohibiting the reader from mistaking her for the symbolic mother of the Mexican mestizo[34]. Just as the reader of Avellaneda's *Sab* mourns the mulatto protagonist's impossible passion for a white woman who is his cousin and master, the reader of *Amor y suplicio* feels sympathy for the Indian woman and Spanish man whose love is cut short by the racial tensions and tyranny surrounding them. (Otila dies in the crossfire between Aztecs and Spaniards.) In Sommer's words, the failed union between these characters representing different races cultivates "a contagious desire for socially productive love and for the State where love is possible" (6). At the same time, the romance of Otila and Velázquez, which ends as abruptly as it began, betrays the contradictory thinking undergirding Paz's approach to indigeneity. On the one hand, he breaks with creole tradition and recognizes indigenous history as a source of Mexican national identity and pride. On the other hand, he is reluctant to save a place for

[33] As she observes, Paz imbues Otila with traits that other authors ascribe to La Malinche (68-90).

[34] This role belongs to Cortés's translator and lover, Malintzin/Doña Marina, who briefly appears in *Amor y suplicio* but is developed in Paz's novel about the first years of the colonial era, *Doña Marina* (1881).

the Indian in his patriotic vision of racial and cultural blending, preferring to envision modern Mexico as a nation comprised of creoles and mestizos[35].

Paz casts both of Mexico's cultural progenitors, Indians as well as Spaniards, in a generally positive light. His veneration of the sixteenth-century Indian is apparent not only in his praise for the Tlaxcalan chieftain and senate, but also in his descriptions of his indigenous protagonists. Consider, as one example, his introduction to Guatimozin:

> El cazador era jóven y hermoso. […] Su pecho levantado y esbelto se encontraba completamente desnudo. En el hombro izquierdo tenia colgada una capa de pieles. Del cuello le pendian ricos collares de perlas, y en la cabeza ostentaba un soberbio penacho de plumas blancas y rojas, unidas sobre la frente con un broche de piedras que despendian un brillo deslumbrador. Con su mano derecha tenia cojido un extremo de su arco el cual dejaba que descansara en la tierra negligentemente.
>
> Su cabello de ébano le caia graciosamente sobre las espaldas; sus negros ojos, medio velados por una melancólica dulzura, estaban sombreados por unas largas pestañas, encima de las que se arqueaban sus pobladas cejas imprimiendo la mayor energía á su semblante. Sus delgados lábios teñidos de un leve tinte de carmin dejaban entrever dos hileras de dientes blancos como el marfil. Su talla elevada y nervuda, su actitud imponente…le hacian asemejarse á una de las divinidades que eran soñadas por los antiguos como moradoras de bosques.
>
> (The hunter was young and handsome. […] His rising and slender chest was completely naked. Over his left shoulder hung a fur cloak. From his neck dangled rich pearl beads, and over his head rose a magnificent plume of white and red feathers that were joined at the forehead by a brooch of gems that dazzled brightly. With his right hand he held onto one end of the bow which rested negligently on the earth.
>
> His ebony hair fell gracefully over his shoulder; his black eyes, half veiled by a melancholy sweetness, were shaded by long lashes, over which his bushy eyebrows arched and gave his face great energy. His thin lips, tinged with a tint of carmine, revealed two rows of teeth as white as

[35] Juárez's ascension to the presidency proved that Mexicans of indigenous origin could rise to the top of the nation's political structure, but it is important to remember that it was mestizos, not Indians, who succeeded in turning their comparatively large number into significant gains in social and political capital during Juárez's years in office (Krauze, *Mexico*, 203

> ivory. His tall and wiry stature, his imposing attitude…made him resemble one of the forest-dwelling deities dreamed up by the ancients; 19)

In these lines, Paz displays his fluency in *indianismo* (Indianism), a romantic idiom that scholars have criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and distracting readers from the injustices suffered by living Indians[36]. To be sure, Paz's portrayal of Guatimozin as a magnificently-formed deity decked in feathers, gemstones, and pearls smacks of romantic exoticism. Nonetheless, it bears noting that Paz's affirmation of Guatimozin's indigeneity is progressive in the context of its era and something of an improvement over previous representations. As the reader will recall, the Avellaneda novel gives the character a light skin color and employs the pseudo-scientific discourse of phrenology to ensure that he is accepted by the reader as an "evolved" specimen, more human than animal. Paz, in contrast to Avellaneda, imbues the Tacuban with physical traits that would make him difficult to mistake for the avatar of a nineteenth-century creole. In the lines that I have excerpted, the character is praised for his "black eyes," "ebony hair," and deep red lips, and later in the text he is distinguished for his "tez de cobriza" (copper skin; 1: 262). In praising Guatimozin for the traits that Avellaneda had stripped away from him, Paz is not only lending the novel an exotic allure. He is also tracing the physical characteristics that in his mind differentiate mestizos from creoles to their own glorious point of origin.

In another contrast to Avellaneda's *Guatimozín* and the other novels that I have discussed, *Amor y suplicio* pardons Spain for the subjugation of indigenous Americans and the disenfranchisement of Spanish creoles. Paz reveals his desire to bury the hatchet

[36] Mexican authors' other-worldly depictions of Indians were often inspired by the novels of Chateaubriand (esp. *Atalá*), Cooper, and Avellaneda. See the monographs by Meléndez and Rodríguez Chicharro.

against the European empire when he introduces the "extraordinario" (extraordinary) conqueror, Cortés, with a summary of Spain's political progress in the nineteenth century (1: 217). This section of the novel includes the lines that I have reprinted as this chapter's epigraph, which invite the modern reader to "forgive and forget" the crimes that Spain committed against Mexico in earlier eras. In the same spirit, the author also writes:

> Como mexicanos, podriamos conservar algun rencor á nuestros conquistadores, y al evocar nuestros recuerdos que poco á poco van, si no desapareciendo en el olvido, al menos amortiguándose con el trascurso de los años, seria fácil que nos impresionáramos al grado de desconocer la verdad histórica y expresarnos apasionadamente. Pero por fortuna…se ha calmado el hervor de la sangre, desde que conseguimos afirmar nuestra independencia, y hoy podemos hablar de la conquista con toda imparcialidad. La primera lectura de nuestros historiadores, por lo que toca á nuestra individualidad, nos produjo un malestar doloroso y llenó de resentimientos nuestra corazón, no podemos negarlo; pero el estudio de la filosofía y el conocimiento de otros sucesos que tuvieron lugar en otras naciones del mundo en los siglos pasados, tan atroces y bárbaros, como los de la conquista de México, nos ha hecho ver este acontecimiento como indeclinable para la marcha de la humanidad. […] Esperamos, por lo mismo, que nadie se sienta herido al leer esta obrita que escribimos con la historia en la mano. Nada más lejos de nostros que resucitar rencores que ya están extinguidos desde que el ilustre general Prim vino á decir á México que España no era su madrasta, sino su digna madre.
>
> (As Mexicans, we could retain a grudge against our conquerors, and while evoking our memories—which gradually fade, if they do not disappear entirely, or at least soften with the passing of time—it would be easy for us to confound ourselves to the point of mistaking historical truth and expressing ourselves passionately. But fortunately…our boiling blood has cooled since we managed to achieve our independence, and today we may speak of the Conquest with complete impartiality. Our first reading of our national historians, since they touch on our individuality, produces a painful malaise and fills our heart with resentment, we cannot deny it; but the study of philosophy and the knowledge of events that have taken place in other nations of the world in past eras, as atrocious and barbaric as the Conquest of Mexico, has helped us see this event as necessary for the progress of humanity. […] We hope, all the same, that that no one feels wounded by this little work that we write with a history book in one hand.

> Nothing is further from our intention than resuscitating grudges that have been extinguished since General Prim came to tell Mexico that Spain was not her stepmother, but rather her worthy mother; 1:-214-215)

Much may be said about these lines, but I will restrict myself to two observations: First, Paz is challenging the work of "national historians," who, he argues, have overstated the Spanish Empire's brutality in their efforts to distinguish Mexico's "individuality." In his view, the crimes that these historians have attributed to Spain are impossible to prosecute because they are recorded in unreliable memories and are no longer relevant because Spain does not harbor an imperial aggression toward its former colony. As evidence of the latter claim, the author reminds the reader that Spain sent a brilliant general, Juan Prim, to help Mexico fend off the French Intervention. Second, despite his desire to distance himself from the "national historians," who are probably members of the older generation of liberals that continued to support Juárez after the fall of the Second Empire, Paz clearly conveys his own vision of Mexican national identity. In this vision, Mexicans do not continue to define themselves in opposition to Spain. Rather, they acknowledge Spain as their "worthy mother" and accept that the decimation of pre-colonial indigenous societies was "necessary for the progress of humanity." Of course, this final quotation suggests the persistence of the creole hope that Indians would intermix themselves out of existence. It is also an affirmation of republicanism, a system of governance that Paz, like other liberals of his time, considered a measure of "progress." As he seems to be arguing, the Tlaxcalans planted the seed of republicanism, but the Spaniards and their descendants cleared the fields so that the crop could eventually be cultivated throughout the region.

Paz's charitable attitude toward Spain also manifests in his manipulation of his research sources. Like most Conquest novels, *Amor y suplicio* mixes original scenes and characters with details that are attributed to the memoirs of Díaz del Castillo and other "official" (often Eurocentric) histories. In the other novels, the imagined and borrowed materials form a dialectic, with the former's inclusion exposing the latter's inadequacies. For example, Avellaneda reconstructs a history of Cuauhtémoc's life prior to 1520 that "corrects" the authoritative histories, and the author of *Jicoténcal* invents a wife for the eponymous warrior who demonstrates the historiographical archive's inattention to the marginalized perspectives of Americans and women[37]. Paz, in contrast to these authors, does not seem interested in challenging or particularizing the Conquest narrative that has been consolidated in three and a half centuries of European historiography. It is true that he develops new backstories for individuals who are known to have existed, including the soldier Juan Velázquez and his Indian wife, Elvira[38]. While these embellishments serve Paz's republican and reconciliatory goals by bringing Guatimozin into contact with the Tlaxcalan senate and imbuing the interracial love of Velázquez and Otila/Elvira with symbolic importance, they do not detectably contradict or diminish any of the details Paz reprints from his research sources[39]. More often than not, the author's original material corroborates the account that is conveyed in his sources or serves as the connective tissue between direct quotations, which in the "Suplicio" section often span multiple pages.

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[37] As Brickhouse argues, *Jicoténcal* "clears a particular literary space for contested interpretations of the same series of events, creating a disjointed relation to its own historical sources" (64).

[38] The name "Otila" may be a modification of "Teutila," the name of Jicoténcal's wife in the 1826 novel.

[39] Meléndez remarks that *Amor y suplicio* is "muy inferior" (very inferior) to Ancona's *Los mártires del Anáhuac* partly because it features long quotations that are not neatly integrated into the narrative (93-97).

On the one hand, Paz's extensive borrowing from the history books suggests that he is less interested in demonstrating his expertise and the extent of his research than in serving as an interpreter of history to readers who may not have access to these other books or the skill to read them themselves. Here, it is difficult not to draw a connection between the historical novel and the dozen or so *leyendas históricas* (historical legends) that the author would compose during the Porfiriato (1876-1910) about significant figures in Mexican history. In his Introduction to the *leyenda* about the life of Juárez (1902), he writes that his goal in the series is to put "al alcance de toda clase de personas y de toda clase de fortunas el conocimiento pleno de los importantes sucesos que se han venido desarrolando á traves de los siglos en el suelo mexicano" (within the reach of all people, regardless of class or fortune, a full knowledge of the important events that have taken place throughout the centuries on Mexican soil; iii). Furthermore, in the introduction to the same *leyenda*, he directs the reader to *Amor y suplicio* for insight into the pre-colonial era[40]. On the other hand, Paz's acquiescence to Díaz del Castillo and other foreign historiographers, who relate most of the actions that occur in "Suplicio" in their own words and are validated as the authors of Mexican history, indicates that there is little discrepancy in the perspectives of these historiographers and Paz despite the centuries

[40] The Maximilian *leyenda* (1899) offers further evidence of Paz's interest in affirming, not challenging, the dominant accounts of Mexican history. As he writes, "Sin apartarse ni un ápice de la historia, sin combiar en su esencia los acontecimientos, sin alterar para nada la verdad, por más que vaya mezclada con algo de novela se agregarán otras páginas… enseñando al pueblo á formar su experiencia propia al presentarle de bulto los males que trajeron á nuestro pais las imprevisiones, la desunión, el espíritu de anarquía que nos dominaba y la falta de juicio que precedió á nuestra organización política (Without stepping one foot away from history, without changing the essence of the events, without altering the truth at all, regardless of the fact that it is mixed with aspects of the novel, [the *leyenda* will] add other pages [to the story of Maximilian]… teaching the people to form their own sense of the experience by presenting them with the many evils wrought upon our country by the lack of foresight, the disunity, the spirit of anarchy that dominated us and the lack of judgment that preceded our [current] political organization" (4).

and experiences that divide them. Of course, the author's acceptance of the authority of these sources is consistent with his efforts to absolve Spain of its history of abuses. The target of the author's criticism is not "the Spaniards of three centuries ago who came to martyr our grandfathers," but rather the "national historians" whose nativist accounts of colonial history threaten to undermine his own project of reunification.

As a tale of interracial love (and as a blending of old Spanish historiography and new Mexican storytelling), *Amor y suplicio* exemplifies many of the characteristics of the national novel, which might explain why it was popular enough with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century readers to justify being republished at least four times in Mexico City and once in Los Angeles before the end of the Second World War (1939-1945)[41]. However, the novel also highlights the limitations of Sommer's approach to nationalist literature, which emphasizes the representation of heterosexual love at the expense of the other kinds of interpersonal relationships that nineteenth-century authors invented to convey their visions for national reconciliation. Writing with the literature of the United States in mind, John Morán González points out that authors have also envisioned a partnership of races in fraternal unions such as the friendships of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and Huck and Jim in Twain's *The*

[41] The Los Angeles edition was issued in 1940 by the Linotipía y Tipografía de C.C. Vincent y Compañía, as reported by Luis Leal in "Novelas mexicanas y chicanas publicadas en los Estados Unidos: Recuento bibliográfico" (Mexican and Chicano novels published in the United States: A bibliographical survey; 2014). As Sommer writes, although foundational fictions like Avellaneda's *Sab* and Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés; o, La loma del ángel* (Cecilia Valdés; or, Angel hill; 1882) were written in the 1800s, they enjoyed their greatest popularity as required school readings in the first half of the twentieth century.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn[42]. In Mexico, patriotic writers did not confront the same sexual prohibitions that complicated the ability of US writers to "represent the national reconciliation of whites and their racial others through an eroticized, vaguely incestuous marriage of national brothers and sisters" (11)[43]. Even so, like these other authors, Paz imagines fraternal bonds that positively render a resolution of political and racial tensions. In the "Amor" section of the novel, the friendship that carries this allegorical weight is that of Guatimozin and Maxixcatzin, which proposes a reconciliation of republican and royalist ideologies in the aftermath of two decades of civil bloodshed. However, as the "Suplicio" section nears its conclusion, Paz develops a second homosocial bond between Guatimozin and his captor, Cortés, that directly addresses racial difference. Although the two characters had butted heads over the former's inability to reveal the location of Moctezuma's riches (and the latter's use of torture to gain this information), they reach a rapprochement that is best emblematized in the book's penultimate chapter. As Guatimozin prepares to be hanged (an event the author depicts as a bureaucratic necessity), he embraces his Spanish conqueror and utters the following absolution: "Adios, Malinche, … no seas cruel con mi pueblo…….. yo…… ¡te perdono!....." (Goodbye, Malinche, … do not be cruel to my people…….. I…… forgive you! .....; 2: 506). According to González, fraternal bonds indicate the limits of patriotic allegory, as these relationships do not produce children and typically do not survive the

[42] I should note that González's critique of *Foundational Fictions* draws on arguments made by Benedict Anderson in a 1989 conference presentation titled "Holy Perversions."

[43] Mexico imported a number of slaves while it was still a colony of Spain and certainly imposed a form of economic oppression that is comparable to slavery on its indigenous inhabitants. However, the colony/ nation outlawed the institution in the 1820s and never developed the slave plantation economy that arose in the United States and Cuba and facilitated widespread sexual abuse of female slaves by white masters.

events outlined in the narrative. As such, Guatimozin's bonds with Maxixcatzin and Cortés must be considered failures. Nonetheless, they succeed in offering templates for inter-political and interracial cooperation that the descendants of Cortés—creoles as well as mestizos—can utilize to unite the *patria* in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Earlier, I stated that *Amor y suplicio* marks a departure from the Conquest novels that had been written outside of Mexico prior to the 1870s and from Paz's journalistic endeavors between the 1850s and 1870s. The novel's clearest break from *Jicoténcal* and *Guatimozín* is its effort to redeem both the indigenous Americans and the Spaniards who were brought into contact with one another as a consequence of the Conquest of Mexico. The authors of all these works render figures like Cuauhtémoc as idealized Indians who are exceptional in body and soul and difficult to reconcile with the poorly educated and impoverished real-world Indians of the nineteenth century. To be sure, none of these texts offers the kind of plea on behalf of present-day Indians that surfaces in later novels like the US author Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) and the Peruvian author Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Aves sin nido*. However, in contrast to Avellaneda and the author of *Jicoténcal*, Paz also extends his idealism to his Spanish characters, including Cortés, the conquistador who plays the role of the maligned villain in the earlier titles. By placing both sides of the conflict under a positive light, he turns the Conquest from an event to be mourned and disavowed into an occasion for commemoration. For all its horrors, the

subjugation of Tenochtitlan brought together the two peoples that would gradually blend and become the Republic of Mexico.

The focus on reconciliation (rather than rebellion) also separates *Amor y suplicio* from the poems and other texts the author was publishing in satirical papers in the 1860s and early 1870s. *El Payaso*, which opposed Maximilian and the Second Empire, and *El Padre Cobos*, which opposed the reinstated republican administration, ridiculed and condemned royalists and the older generation of liberals who continued to accept Juárez as their standard-bearer. The novel also conveys Paz's faith in republicanism and preference for leaders who govern through reason and fairness instead of superstition and the hunger for power[44]. However, in contrast to the columns, poems, and cartoons that appeared in *El Payaso* and *El Padre Cobos*, it also affirms the humanity of his opponents. Moreover, through the friendship of Guatimozin and Maxixcatzin, it represents the changing of political ideologies as a process that is natural and dignified. Perhaps the best explanation for *Amor y suplicio*'s comparatively cordial tone is its difference in genre and audience. Conventionally, critics have positioned newspapers as a platform for public, political discourse that catered to male readers. In contrast, novels have been perceived as a domestic literature most useful as a distraction for women and children. As I explained in Chapter 2, the disdain for the reading and writing of (certain) novels had dissipated in places like the northeastern United States by the time Paz published *Amor y suplicio*, but

[44] Of course, Paz's journalism casts Juárez in a more negative light than he tends to appear in works of Mexican history. Especially as the Porfiriato wore on and Díaz revealed himself to be a tyrant even less willing than his predecessors to relinquish the powers of the presidential office, Juárez was redeemed in the public imaginary as a patriot and something of a folk hero. Even Paz would eventually contribute to the positive reappraisal of the first Indian president in his 1902 *leyenda histórica*.

in Mexico, where political fragmention prevented novel-writing from becoming a national(ist) endeavor for several decades, the bias persisted[45]. Paz is not abandoning his "combative labor" on the battlefield and in the satirical papers by embracing the romance and sentimentality of the historical novel. Rather, with his retelling of the Conquest of Mexico, he is recognizing and taking tactical advantage of the genre's popularity with women and children. This is a strategy that he would frequently return to over the next forty years in his series of *leyendas históricas* tracking the Mexican people's progress from its primordial encounter between Indians and Spaniards to the ascension of its first mestizo president, Porfirio Díaz. Like Avellaneda and Wallace before him, Paz is simply staging his old fight for his political ideals in a new location—his compatriots' homes.

Today's reader tends to know Paz, one of late nineteenth-century Mexico's most prolific and representative writers, through the recollections of his grandson, the poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz. As a child, Octavio looked upon his grandfather as a sarcastic old man who inhabited a house that was full of books and relics from a remote and ghost-like era in Mexican history. Ireneo, despite the protests of his son (Octavio's father), insisted on hanging on his wall a large portrait of Díaz, who would remain in power for twice as many years as Juárez before fleeing to Europe on the eve of the 1910 Revolution. Reflecting on this portrait years later, the grandson would conclude that

[45] See Read, pp. 63-72, 80; and Benítez-Rojo ("Nineteenth"), pp. 461-462. I should note that I am advocating for a different history of the Mexican national novel than the one Anderson offers in *Imagined Communities*. Focusing on Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento* (The mangy parrot; 1816), he dates the emergence of nationalist discourse in Mexico to the long War of Independence (c.1810-1821). As Rojas and Cortázar might say, the Lizardi novel belongs to an earlier generation of Pan-American republicanism that should be distinguished from the nationalist republicanism that arose as a consequence of the Mexican American War. Moreover, I am heeding Culler's advice not to confuse novels and newspapers, which have distinct patterns of composition and consumption (see "Anderson and the Novel," 1999).

Ireneo was a revolutionary who had had the misfortune of living to see the ideals and the heroes he had championed as a young man become corrupted. In any case, while it has been my goal in this chapter to reveal how Ireneo's first effort at historical fiction, *Amor y suplicio*, turns to the Conquest of Mexico to enact the liberal agenda in the postintervention era, it is my hope that it has also helped bring the author out of the long shadows that have been cast over him by his close associations with Porfirio Díaz and Octavio Paz, who are two of Mexico's best-known figures from any historical era. As I have explained, the novel fits into republican projects of national reconciliation and history-writing that Ireneo Paz undertook long before he became a dictator's apologist and a famous poet's grandfather.

Conclusion

My personal interest in the story of the Conquest of Mexico dates to 1993, when my family visited an exhibition called *AZTEC: The World of Montezuma* at the Denver Museum of Natural History[1]. Organized in collaboration with Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology), which lent the DMNH a number of stone carvings and other artifacts, the exhibition was my introduction to the figures of Moctezuma, Cuauhtémoc, and Cortés. It was certainly my first exposure to the practice of human immolation, which to the horror of my parents was illustrated in vivid detail.

Attended by more than 721,000 people (a record for the Denver museum), *AZTEC* capitalized on the popular interest that the five-hundredth anniversary of the First Voyage of Christopher Columbus (1492) had rekindled in the colonization of the Americas (Nein 286). As the reader may recall, the quincentennial precipitated a fierce debate between political leaders and capitalists who had planned to honor Columbus with festivals and merchandise and critics who argued that venerating him was an act of symbolic violence against the descendants of subjugated indigenous civilizations. The latter group included the performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez Peña, who appeared in natural history museums, shopping malls, and other public spaces as "Guatinaui" Indians from an island they claimed had been discovered recently in the Gulf of Mexico. From behind the bars of a golden cage (a reference to the ethnographic displays that occurred throughout Europe and the Americas between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries), Fusco and

[1] The institution is now known as the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Gómez Peña conducted a "reverse ethnography" of the men and women who came to view their performance (57). In "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" (1994), Fusco reports that the artists had expected their "exhibition" to be accepted as a "counter-quincentenary" parody and did not anticipate that so many viewers would approach it in earnest (38). She concludes that the project revealed the persistence of a "colonial subconscious" that entitles white Europeans and Americans to condescend toward their racial others even when they claim to reject racism and reveal a discomfort for displays of racial difference (47). Put another way, Fusco and Gómez Peña discovered that white viewers who gawked at the display and objectified their bodies were prepared and in some cases even eager to enact the role of the Guatinauis' conquerors.

For Fusco, as for many opponents of the quincentennial celebrations, Columbus was the obvious emblem of Europe's colonial brutality. To be sure, the admiral erected some of the structures that would continue to define the Old World's interactions with the New World for more than three centuries, including compelling indigenous men and women to carry out slave labor and transporting human "specimens" back to European courts and city squares to serve as lessons in otherness. However, the idea that Columbus personally represents the ambition and the barbarity of the Conquest of the Americas is a recent phenomenon. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, the author of *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), this narrative did not emerge until the nineteenth century, and it was largely the achievement of Catholics of Italian and Irish descent who were living in the United States and identifying their own cultural roots in

the hemisphere[2]. As Trouillot explains, Columbus provided these ethnic groups "with a public example of Catholic devotion and civic virtue, and thus a powerful rejoinder to the cliché that allegiance to Rome preempted the Catholics' attachment to the United States" (123)[3]. Before the four-hundredth anniversary of his voyage was commemorated in the lavish international exhibitions of 1892 (Madrid) and 1893 (Chicago), it was not the sea-faring Genoan but Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico, and Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, who drew the attention of the champions and critics of European imperialism. Unlike Columbus, who died before Spain fully appreciated the significance of his "discovery," Cortés and Pizarro led wars against magnificent empires and delivered vast stretches of land into Spain's hands. These men did not always please the court, which debated the legality of their actions and grew uncomfortable with the power they wielded. Even so, they were treated like celebrities in their own lifetimes, and the accounts they and their soldiers left behind have enabled generations of readers to relive their stories[4].

Nineteenth-century novels about the Conquest of Mexico, which invariably place Cortés in a role of importance, whether as a hero (Munroe's *The White Conquerors*) or a villain (*Jicoténcal*, *Guatimozín*), foreshadow the racism that Fusco and Gómez Peña detected in 1992. As I discussed in Chapter 3, few (if any) of these novels were written with the desire to improve the situation of Indians in the nineteenth century, though they tend to place the Indians of the early sixteenth century in a positive light as members of a

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[2] Trouillot, like Fusco, wrote this work with the 1992 quincentennial specifically in mind.

[3] Columbus was born in the Republic of Genoa, which is now a part of Italy.

[4] Columbus authored a journal, travel notes, and poems that capture his experiences. However, the later conquests are better documented in letters, memoirs, and other such texts—largely as a result of the court's growing desire to keep informed about the colonial enterprise. As González Echevarría suggests in *Myth and Archive*, the colonization of the Americas gave birth to modern archival practices.

heroic race mercilessly decimated by European tyrants. Even when these texts condemn the brutality of Cortés and his followers, they have contemporary injustices more clearly in mind—the suppression of creole intellectuals, in the case of Avellaneda's *Guatimozín*, or the refusal of Juárez to acknowledge a successor, in the case of Paz's *Amor y suplicio*. In this respect, they seem to bear out Fusco's suggestion that little has changed in how white Americans of European descent have perceived themselves in relation to the men and women of indigenous heritage with whom they have shared the hemisphere.

However, collapsing so long a stretch of history, even in the admirable effort to reveal patterns of colonial violence, leads Fusco to offer an ahistorical account of white people's representations of their racial others that does not account for variances. The novels that I have analyzed in this dissertation do not contradict her claim that a "colonial subconscious" has permeated the last five centuries of Western history. However, they do confirm that colonialism fractured the New World into a prism of classes (peninsulars, creoles, Indians, and mestizos, to name a few) that are better represented as a hierarchy than a mere division between whites and others. They reveal that colonial structures like the Cuban saccharocracy and the suppression of Enlightenment philosophy throughout Spain's colonies led some of Europe's children (creoles), when they contemplated the Conquest of Mexico, to identify with the Indians who shared their hemisphere instead of the conquistadors who shared their blood. In fact, the novelists that I have highlighted used the story of the brutal subjugation of the Aztecs to express perspectives that must be considered marginalized in their nineteenth-century contexts. Avellaneda, who faced ridicule from her family for her literary ambitions and was well acquainted with Spain's

systematic disenfranchisement of creoles, turns the story of the Conquest into a critique of tyranny and a plea for royal leniency on the behalf of literary Cubans who were using works of historical fiction to challenge the dominancy of sugar cultivation. Wallace, after being humiliated in the US Civil War and his efforts to aid the republican Mexican army in its war against the French Intervention, cautions political leaders against reunifying the nation under an imperial banner and affirms the old-fashioned virtues of literary romance. Even Paz, who would help a despot claim the Mexican presidency, interrupts dominant postintervention discourse by opposing the Juárez administration and contradicting a generation of patriotic historians by advocating for a reconciliation of Mexico and Spain. All three of these texts refashion the dominant narrative of the Conquest as it had been told in several centuries of Eurocentric historiography with direct rebuttals and romantic embellishments. They reinforce some of the colonial mechanisms that Fusco discusses in her essay, but they are nonetheless fundamentally anti-colonial in nature.

In the Introduction, I wrote that by recognizing Conquest novels as a discursive formation one might excavate narratives that counter the history of the nineteenth-century Americas as it is conventionally recorded. At that time, I critiqued the local imperative undergirding the study of nationalist literature that encourages scholars to privilege texts that are set within the nation's borders and dismiss texts that are set in foreign locations as unsophisticated entertainment. Indeed, the Conquest novels that I have discussed are inaccurate, exotic, and cosmopolitan. They imbue historical figures like Moctezuma and Cuauhtémoc with improbable backstories and flamboyant apparel, and they invite the nineteenth-century reader to traipse through a time and a *patria* that may not be his or her

own. But this does not mean they are not also involved in the work of uniting groups of people around shared regional or national ideals, or in imparting important lessons about governance and anti-imperialism. To the contrary, these novels expose the shifting cartography of the nineteenth-century Americas and confirm through literary mechanisms the truism that citizens of one region or nation articulate their identity by distinguishing themselves from the citizens of other regions or nations. Avellaneda was a belle of the Spanish court at the same time that colonial officials were oppressing and exiling Cuban authors who challenged the saccharocracy, but she utilized her familiarity with the queen to advocate for colonial reforms that affirmed Cuban cultural difference and might have granted the island political autonomy. Wallace read extensively about Mexico and used his experiences in the Mexican American War and as an assistant to the *Juaristas* during the French Intervention to write a novel cautioning his nation's leaders against embracing imperialism. Paz encouraged his Mexican readers to suture the recent wounds inflicted by one European empire (France) by forgiving the old wounds inflicted by another (Spain). In sum, these texts confirm that the story of Cortés's arrival to Mexico offered a platform for sharing perspectives on foreign empire and local nationalism. Moreover, they bear out some of the nuances that are suppressed in studies of colonialism, highlighting how creoles have rejected certain aspects of colonialism while supporting or remaining willfully blind to others. They bear out an evolution in creoles' perspectives on their relation to the rest of the American hemisphere and their contemporaries in Europe.

I am completing this dissertation in 2016, three years before the world will have the opportunity to recognize another divisive quincentennial—that of Cortés's arrival to

the American mainland. After the outcries of 1992, I think any commemoration of the Conquest of Mexico would address the event's brutality, holding Cortés and the Spanish Empire accountable for the violence that was wrought upon heroes like Cuauhtémoc and the thousands of other indigenous men and women whose names are not recorded in the history books. As scholars prepare to participate in debates about the Conquest's place in the Western imagination, I hope they will remember the novels that entertained so many readers in the nineteenth century and have been summarily undermined in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The works that I have discussed bear out Trouillot's suggestion that it has been Cortés, not Columbus, who has historically inspired American writers to reflect on their coloniality. Moreover, since they tend to sympathize with their Indian characters, these texts expose a genealogy of anti-colonialist/imperialist critique that predates the anti-quincentenary movement of the 1990s.

Of course, there is much still to be said about the nineteenth century's fascination with the Conquest of Mexico. Perhaps future scholarship will reveal additional correspondences between the novels I have discussed and the ones I have listed in the Appendix. Perhaps it will expose other issues of contemporary relevance that nineteenth-century writers addressed through their representations of the Conquest. Whatever future scholarship holds, I believe the present work amply illustrates American writers' consistent acceptance of Spain's subjugation of Tenochtitlan as an allegorically useful narrative. Like the historical narratives that inspired and lent them intellectual authority, Conquest novels nearly always reveal less about the event itself than about the times and the places in which they were written.

Appendix: Nineteenth-Century Conquest Novels

Listed below are fifteen texts by Cuban, Mexican, and US American authors that directly relate scenes from the war between the Aztec Empire and Hernán Cortés's army of European and indigenous followers (1519-1521). A comprehensive list of Conquest-related novels would also include titles such as Ireneo Paz's *Doña María* (1881), which confronts similar issues but are set in the years following the subjugation of Tenochtitlan.

Author	*Title (first publication)*
Anonymous	*Jicoténcal* (Philadelphia: W. Stavely; 1826)
Robert Montgomery Bird	*Calavar; or, The Knight of the Conquest: A Romance of Mexico…* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard; 1834).
Robert Montgomery Bird	*The Infidel; or, The Fall of Mexico: A Romance* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard; 1835)
Joseph Holt Ingraham	*Montezuma, the Serf; or, The Revolt of the Mextilli: A Tale of the Last Days of the Aztec Dynasty* (Boston: H.L. Williams, 1845)
Edward Maturin	*Montezuma, the Last of the Aztecs: A Romance* (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845)
Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda	*Guatimozín, el último emperador de Méjico* [Guatimozín, the last emperor of Mexico] (serialized in *El Heraldo* [Madrid]; 1846)
V.V. Vide	*The Aztec Princess; or, Destiny Foreshadowed* (novella printed in Vide's *American Tableau, No. 1*; New York: Buckland & Sumner; 1846)
Anonymous	*Chacahual* (serialized in *The United States Democratic Review* [New York]; 1848)
William Whiteman Fosdick	*Malmiztic the Toltec and the Cavaliers of the Cross* (Cincinnati: Moore & Anderson; 1851)
Eligio Ancona	*Los mártires del Anahuac* [The martyrs of Anahuac] (Mexico City: J. Batiza; 1870)

Frederick Whittaker	*The Red Prince; or, The Last of the Aztecs: A Romance of the Lost Palace* (New York: Beadle and Adams; 1871)
Ireneo Paz	*Amor y suplicio: novela histórica* [Love and torment: historical novel] (Mexico City: Paz, 1873)
Lew Wallace	*The Fair God; or, The Last of the 'Tzins: A Tale of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Osgood; 1873)
Thomas A. Janvier	*The Aztec Treasure-House: A Romance of Contemporaneous Antiquity* (New York: Harper & Bros.; 1890)
Kirk Munroe	*The White Conquerors: A Tale of Aztec and Toltec* (New York: Scribner's Sons; 1893)

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